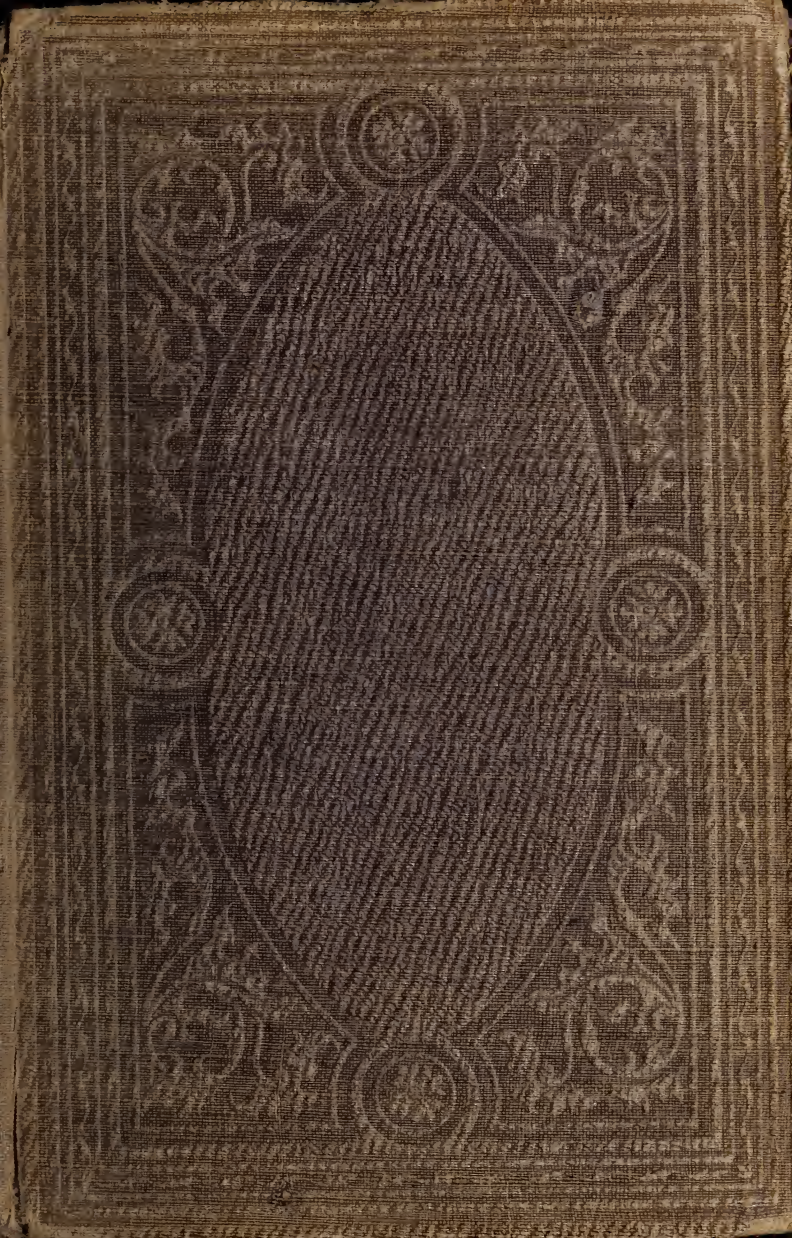

THE

# LIFE AND EXPERIENCE

OF A

# CONVERTED INFIDEL.



By JOHN SCARLETT,
OF THE NEW-JERSEY CONFERENCE.

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# PREFACE.

In this little volume will be found some of the matter that appeared in the "Christian Advocate and Journal" of the year 1849, in a series of articles on "Christian Experience," under the author's proper signature. The portions extracted from those articles, however, comprise but a very inconsiderable amount of the entire book, most of which now, for the first time, meets the public eye.

When the writer shall meet his readers in the great concourse at the general judgment, may the memory of what has been written, and what has been read, not be

accompanied with that sorrow for which many immortal spirits are now preparing themselves, by sensual and vile publications, but be blessed, is the prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

RED BANK, N, J., *May* 22, 1852.

# CONTENTS.

## CHAPTER I.

### BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE.



## CHAPTER II.

### STIFLING OF EARLY CONVICTIONS.



## CHAPTER III.

### FIRST STEPS TOWARD SCEPTICISM.

## CHAPTER IV.

### SETTLING DOWN IN DEISM—THEN UNSETTLED.



## CHAPTER V.

### CONVERSION.



## CHAPTER VI.

### GROWTH IN CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

## CHAPTER VII.

### VISITS TO TAMMANY HALL.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### CALL TO THE MINISTRY.



## CHAPTER IX.

### DEALINGS OF PROVIDENCE.



## CHAPTER X.

### EVIDENCES OF BIBLE TRUTH TESTED.

## CHAPTER XI.

### INCIDENTS AND REFLECTIONS.



## CHAPTER XII.

### FRAGMENTS GATHERED UP IN THE ITINERANCY.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS.

THE

# CONVERTED INFIDEL.

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## CHAPTER I.

### BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE.

How dear to this heart are the scenes of my childhood,
When fond recollection presents them to view.

WOODWORTH.

I WAS born on the thirtieth day of April, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and three. The place of my nativity was a sequestered spot in Morris County, New-Jersey, where the woods often echoed from rocks and mountains with "the wolf's long howl." My sojourn in this my birthplace was brief—not quite two years. Although the spot of earth first looked upon by my infant eyes has left no pictures on the canvass of my memory, yet, in long after-life, when I visited it, it seemed to me that my peculiar love of woods and mountain-scenery received in infancy its first impulse. The first impressions of childhood are strong and durable;

and this should not be forgotten by parents in their endeavours to make impressions upon the tender minds of their offspring. Before I was two years old my parents, with their two children—an infant brother and myself—removed to Pompton township, in the adjoining county of Bergen, where I spent fifteen years of my youthful existence among its wooded hills, vales, and plains.

My parents were poor, but of good moral reputation: both being in the habit of reading much in the Bible; and, although neither of them enjoyed experimental religion, they held the word of God in great veneration. I can never forget how highly my mother prized the Bible which she received as a donation from the "Bible Society." How much is attributable to the influence of *that Bible*, under God, as the means of her children's welfare, will not probably be known until the day of eternity declares it, and the final destinies of man are sealed.

My father was a native of Ireland; and, because of his early religious training probably, held ever after strenuously to the faith and forms of the Church of England. My grandfather, on my father's side, was a native of England, who married an Irish lady and settled in Ireland, and was visited at his own house by Mr. Wesley a

number of times during the great Methodist revival of primitive religion in Great Britain, and became a Methodist. My father had thus an opportunity of seeing the founder of Methodism, and of hearing him preach. I have heard him describe the person of Mr. Wesley, and frequently remark, that "while Mr. Whitefield was the more eloquent in the delivery of a sermon, Wesley was the more fluent and mighty in the Scriptures."

My father emigrated to this country in the year 1793. He landed in the city of New-York, after a voyage of ten weeks—quite a long voyage when compared with the time to make one now by Atlantic steamers. He was in the city of Philadelphia during the rage of the yellow fever there in that year, and was bereaved of an elder brother suddenly by it, who had preceded him in making a home in this land of freedom, and was an attraction here that led my father from his early home. The loss of a beloved brother had a melancholy effect upon him. He often spoke of this sad event—of his bereft and lonely state in a land of strangers—with fast-falling tears. My father was acknowledged by those acquainted with him to possess talents, information, and agreeable manners. He was often called upon by his neighbours to give

counsel on points of law, to write wills and deeds, &c., and to read the Scriptures at the bedside of the sick. His chief occupation, during the latter part of his life, was teaching school. In this business of training the youthful mind, and starting it on a journey that will never end, he was deemed competent and successful; and would have been more so, but for causes in his habits to be deplored, over which I would drop the veil with a tear.

My mother held to the Dutch Reformed Church; and, with the consent of my father, had her four children (of whom I am the eldest) all christened by a minister of that denomination. She was industrious and economical, and did much for the good of her children. With uncompromising perseverance she strove, in honest labour and toil, to rear a family of children, which consisted of four sons and one only daughter.

Before I was thirteen years of age I received most of the schooling I have ever had; and this was at long intervals, under the tuition of my father, who, at times, taught in places too distant from home for me to attend. My education was, therefore, "finished" in two additional quarters of "night school," and I was forced to "graduate" with but a slight knowledge of reading,

writing, and arithmetic. English grammar I was never systematically taught, and the language used by my associates was very imperfect, being a mixture of corrupt Low Dutch and bad English. I had many strange ideas that should have been corrected. Some of the hills, in the vicinity of my early home, I looked upon as mounds or monuments thrown up by a race of huge giants that once peopled this country, to perpetuate the memory of their dead. That bird of night, the whippowil, whose doleful notes I heard when but a child three years old, held up for the purpose in my father's arms, as near by in the woods it would haunt our dwelling, I viewed as a messenger from the land of spirits to warn men of some coming direful event. Even unto the present I dislike the music of that tongueless bird. The croaking of innumerable frogs in early spring, I took to be the noise of the galloping of horses over flat rocks. A watch and a gun I concluded to belong to the thinking race. This appeared to me quite evident from the nature of their operations and performances. Witches riding on broomsticks through the air, on moonlight nights, formed a part of my creed; and ghosts and hobgoblins were often in my "night thoughts" and also in my "day-dreams."

Such fancies, I have reason to believe, received a kind of nourishment and strength from the legends and fairy tales about "Irish wakes" and the "Banshie," related often by my father, who loved to have his children about him, pleasing them with many a marvellous story brought with him from his native land. On summer evenings he would sit under the tree before the door, smoking his pipe, with closed eyes, telling us of wild adventures, and "hair-breadth 'scapes," and ghostly sights, until the place would almost appear alive with "face-thronged visions." How much wrong there was in all this is probably not now to be known. It kindled up the young imaginations of the children, and was in the father a strong attraction drawing them toward him. The powers of imagination in the children doubtless were strengthened by the activity induced. Children are fond of the marvellous, and such fondness is sometimes realized in the fruit of seed sown early, through all the after-stages of life. The imagination should not be neglected, to run wild; it should be properly cultivated. Superstition, however, with every deviation from moral and Scriptural truth, ought to be avoided with care by parents, in their familiar intercourse with their children; for many are the unnecessary fears and frights, and ner-

vous agitations, experienced by those who, while young, have had their minds injuriously wrought upon by story-tellers, in their relations of signs, ominous tokens, haunted houses, witches, and ghosts.

I was a puny child, imaginative and timid, and loved my father with filial affection, and placed unbounded confidence in his ability. On all occasions, when danger seemed to threaten, I flew to him for relief. When I was sick, he alone was the physician that could cure me. In dark and stormy seasons, when he was absent, my mind was gloomy beyond description. How fearful to me was the day fixed upon by the noted impostor, "Hughes," as the period in which the world was to be burned! How sad was I, on the morning of that day when it arrived! Then how confidently did my father assure me there was no truth to be relied on in the impostor's prophecy! The reliance I placed on my father's word in this matter was all that bore me up until the day was past.

The second war in which our country was involved with Great Britain had also an alarming effect upon my tender mind, as I heard frequent reports, from time to time, of its operations and progress. The appearance of the soldiers in their regimental uniforms—their bright sashes,

nodding plumes, and glittering steel—while drafting men and enlisting recruits for the regular army, amid the music of the "stirring drum" and "ear-piercing fife," under the banner of stripes and stars! all filled me with trembling and dread. Then I hung upon my father's words about "the war," as though they had been oracles. I wished for peace. When other children of my age would run to where the soldiers were gathering, I would shrink away and hide myself. Once, after the war was ended, I was induced to go to a "general training;" and as I, with a number of persons of both sexes, was approaching the parade-ground, I heard the report of a gun, and saw the white cloud of smoke rise from a point in the training ranks, instantly a young lady near me fell, the blood gushing from her temple. She was caught in her fall by a gentleman walking at her side. It was an accident; and a buckshot was cut from the scalp, not having penetrated the skull, and she soon recovered. This circumstance made a strong impression on my mind, and gave me a dislike for firearms. I have never yet owned a gun.

My timidity, I think, has been owing, in some degree, to a constitutional nervous weakness, which showed itself often in frightful fancies and

disturbed sleep and dreams. I frequently rose out of my bed in the night, and walked abroad in my sleep. I have walked in this way hastily over ledges of rocks, watched by my brothers, not at all conscious of danger. The clouds, it seemed to me, could I have reached the tops of them, were as permanent a place to walk upon as the earth. I could recall, when awake, the feelings I had during the state of somnambulism. I was cured of this complaint, by having my feet bathed in hot water while in the paroxysm.

Every incident occurring in youth, with everything calculated to arrest the early attention, has a lasting effect upon the mind. Then sympathies and antipathies are formed, possibly never to die. When but a small boy, I received a severe kick from a horse in the breast, leaving me in a state of stupor, bordering on death, for some time. I never after could have a liking for horses, and have never owned one, and probably never will.

The scenes of my early life, though marked with regretted sins, are still dear to my recollections. "The cot of my father," that stood upon the mountain's sunny side, with its rude unplaned clapboards and roof—its chimney of lath and clay—its large fireplace, in the corner of which I

have often studied my lesson—and the uncarpeted floor and rude furniture—I delight to remember; and I love to dwell on

MY EARLY MOUNTAIN-HOME.

I sit and view, by mem'ry's light,
  My mountain-home of early days—
Each pleasing scene of young delight,
  And all on which I used to gaze:

That cottage, nestled 'mong the trees;
  That sloping green before outspread;
That green vine, trembling in the breeze,
  Which canopied that humble shed.

From crag and cliff again I view
  That pleasant country-scene below:
*Here* winds the river, deep and blue;
  And *there* the rippling streamlets flow;

And *yonder* stands the mountain-green,
  With sky of beauty bended o'er it,
Bordering the rural scene
  Which sleeps in smoky light before it.

The robin's song at morn I hear,
  As when on boyhood's ear it fell;
That song to me was ever dear,
  Fresh-breathed from wooded grove and dell.

## CHAPTER II.

### STIFLING OF EARLY CONVICTIONS.

Will not the things of the present world, which surround children on every side, naturally take up their thoughts, if talked over to them, and set God at a greater distance from them than he was before?—WESLEY.

I HAVE had spiritual convictions, to a greater or less degree, even from my early childhood. When but six years old, I had impressions of sinfulness and guilt. Seasons of seriousness, from the operations of the Holy Spirit upon my young mind, gave me warnings and fears, in view of the future, urging me to repentance. True, I had not a perfect understanding of the *causes* of my sorrow; but I desired, when I should die, to go to heaven with the good and happy. Many times I went away alone, and wept in bitterness of spirit, when I could apprehend no other cause than that I was wicked, and wanted to be good. My crying and sobbing, on such occasions, were irrepressible; and I would go alone, for the purpose of giving vent more fully and freely to my feelings. There was no one to sympathize with these early sorrows. Experimental religion was not professed by any one that I knew. When,

sometimes, my weeping and anguish of heart would be detected or suspected by my appearance, I have been roughly interrogated on the subject. On one occasion, an old man, a neighbour, much given to story-telling and profane swearing, met me, and said: "Boy, I have heard about your great troubles! Your crying will do no good. I know what ails you: you think of things that you had better let alone. I was just so myself once, when I was a boy; but I have not been troubled, in thinking of dying and the other world, and all that sort of thing, for many a day. And, after a while, you too will get over your foolishness, and not bother your brains any more about such things." O, what advice was this to give to a penitent child! No doubt he talked to me from his own experience; and, it is quite likely, he was not again troubled in his feelings, until too late to be at all profitable to him. I have often thought that if some kind Christian had then taken me by the hand, and led me to the cross, and pointed me to Him who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me," I should have obtained "grace to help in that time of need;" and my young heart would have received the Christian stamp, and my soul been comforted in my affliction. I might have been a Christian from my youth, had I early been in-

structed, as children are now taught, in our Sabbath schools.

The Holy Spirit employed *means* in the work of my early convictions. Although I had no Sunday school to go to, nor instruction from religious persons, I read the Bible, and had a retentive memory. From the "Child's Instructor," a small school-book, I received good impressions. In a primer, containing a representation of the burning of John Rogers, the pious martyr, I read some powerful warnings and incentives to early piety. Christ, Youth, Satan, and Death were in it personified in the form of holding a dialogue on the subject of the necessity of religion. The liability, on the part of youth, to continue sinning against God until death, was set forth before me in strong light; and I was so overcome, at the time of reading the colloquy, that I trembled with awful apprehension, and made a promise to my heavenly Father that, if he spared my life, I would repent and be good. I prayed to him to keep me from Satan. It was a long time before my seriousness wore away.

On all occasions, when I feared the displeasure of my parents, or dreaded danger of any sort, I would pray to God to regulate matters *to suit my convenience.* When I had been in mischief, I prayed for forgiveness; when I had lost any

one of my play-things, I prayed that I might be enabled to find it; when it thundered and stormed, I prayed it might soon be calm and clear again; and I was anxious in "seeking after a sign" concerning my future destiny. Once, while I was fishing alone, I prayed for a sign thus: "O Lord, if I will at last be saved in heaven or lost in hell, I would like to have some token of it *now*. If the first fish I catch shall be a bass, I will take it as a good sign; if any other fish, a bad one." I trembled at the issue, as I dropped my line into the water. At length I had "a bite," and drew up, sure enough, *a bass*—but it fell from the hook before it reached my hand. I concluded God would not give me a sign, and strove to be satisfied without one. The Holy Spirit gave me a desire for a knowledge of "things to come;" and my reading and praying, though in much darkness, tended to continue in me the sensibility of conscience; and, for a time, my convictions increased with my years. I came very near being drowned, on a certain occasion, which increased my anxiety of mind on the subject of my soul's best interest.

As the demands of a large and growing family pressed hard upon my parents, I got consent of my father, when about thirteen years old, to go and live with a neighbouring farmer, and do such

work for him as I was able. I remained with him several years, and acquired habits of industry that have had a salutary effect upon my constitution. The rugged realities of life I cannot conceive to have been of disadvantage to me, yet I did not improve them as I might have done for future good.

I had not long left the restraints of my parental home, before I was led away from all seriousness by the perverted tastes and sinful amusements of the young around me. From Mockapin to Wynochy, from Ringwood to Pompton Plains, on holiday occasions and training days, dancing, drinking, gambling, and fighting were made the means of spoiling young hearts, and ruining immortal souls, to a degree beyond calculation. Thus it was, at least, during my sojourn in those parts: and, although I never publicly danced, yet I was often drawn, by the attractions of the fiddle-bow and nimble heels, to join in the carousals, and remained until morning came before sleep. How natural to forget God under such circumstances!

Ever since I was made a subject of converting grace, I have thought much on the scenes through which I passed while young, with companions in vice, on festive occasions. I shall not see many of them again, until we meet at the great tribunal.

It was in the spring of 1820 that I left the community where I spent my school-boy days with mischief-loving companions, on foot and alone, travelling some twelve miles in search of an opportunity to learn a trade. I found a man, to whom I was bound to be taught the shoe-making business. He had then two apprentices, with whom, and myself, he removed, in two weeks after, to Newark, New Jersey, where I lived with him four years. On the 17th day of April of that year I first saw Newark. It then contained about five thousand or six thousand inhabitants. I thought it then a most delightful place, and have never yet altered my mind. The term of my apprenticeship was, on the whole, not disagreeable to me, but an important period of my life.

Situated as I now was, in the enjoyment of privileges to which I had before been a stranger, I was led to think that God had directed my steps to such a place of piety and good morals, and that he did, in reality, still care for me! Though recognised by the more favoured to be a "country boy," from my "green" appearance, I soon became acquainted with the neighbouring apprentices, and with them, on Sunday evenings, would "go to meeting"—sometimes to one church, and then to another. My father had

given me strict orders to attend worship in the Episcopal Church, often telling me that *that* was "the true Church." For some months I continued to frequent that place of worship; and can yet call to mind occasions when I listened to the preaching of the Rev. Mr. Biard and the Rev. Mr. Powers. I remember also the venerable appearance of the Rev. Uzal Ogden.* I next went to the Presbyterian Church, and heard the Rev. Dr. Griffin, that strong man of God. His powers of description and appeals to the sinner, on some occasions which peculiarly called them forth, can never be forgotten by those who once were favoured with hearing him. The Baptist Church, too, I attended, and heard, with moved feelings, the Rev. Mr. Jones, that good old man. His solemn prayers, offered in tears, greatly affected me. Just before I reached the age of eighteen, I ventured to go and hear Methodist preaching. The Methodists my father and mother agreed to dislike; and, for fear I should chance to go among them, had thrown many discouragements in my way. However, I was determined to go and hear for myself. The Rev. Joseph Lybrand was the first Methodist preacher I ever heard preach; and never before, under preaching, had

* "Parson Ogden" wrote an able reply to the "Age of Reason."

I felt as I did under his. I can yet distinctly recall his appearance, as he stood in the high pulpit of the old "Chapel" in Halsey-street. His heavenly countenance—his hair of glossy smoothness lay close over a forehead of finest mould, and his eyes were placid, yet lustrous—the general expression of benignity that played through all his features, and the changes in his countenance which the excitement of preaching would produce, I can never forget. The first sermon I heard him preach made me tremble and weep. It waked up in me thoughts of the past. Convictions when a child, dangers escaped, and the forbearing mercy of God, all rushed at once into my mind. The next time I heard him was on a Sabbath evening; and I believe it was his last sermon in Newark—his "farewell sermon." In it he dwelt principally on the awful scenes of the final judgment. I wept bitterly, but concealed my emotions as much as possible. On the same night I dreamed I saw all nations coming to judgment, and standing before God, in two great divisions—the good on the right hand, and the bad on the left. I saw, in my dream, heaven and hell, and was exceedingly terrified. In the morning I remained longer in bed than my fellow-apprentice, in order to try to pray. When I was alone in the room, I arose, and bowed on

my knees before God. My heart was tender, and I was glad that I had resolution to pray. That morning rose on me with a poetic pleasantness I delight still to remember. My desire for keeping all this a secret weakened my resolution; and when ridicule came I was not prepared to bear it. In a few days I gave up striving to be good, resisting the Spirit, and doing violence to my own conscience, just because other boys would do so.

Apprentices, in large manufacturing cities, are in great need of being properly cared for by the religious portion of the community. They occupy an interesting stage of human life. They need watching and encouragement for good. They have many temptations to evil, and are easily spoiled. And who are the apprentices in our country? Those who will soon, with the rest of the labouring men, be the "bone and sinew" of all its wholesome institutions. Apprentices are soon to be the *business men* of the nation. Having an eye to their welfare, is a watchful effort made in time, with a good hope of future good to the nation. Let not honest labour at a trade be despised. Any man who may have arisen to what he may deem a more favourable situation than the labouring with his hands for a livelihood, if he thinks mechanics or apprentices beneath his notice, is more deserving

of being despised than their occupation, by which he is himself sustained. "Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth;" and the "common people," more than any other, heard Jesus "gladly." In Newark, New-Jersey, mechanics and apprentices have always been recognised as holding an important place in the community; and I hope it will be long before it shall be otherwise in that city, so noted for piety and good morals in its permanent population. I have cause to be thankful that I ever lived there; and had I improved my privileges more during my apprenticeship than I did, I would have reaped many advantages from those

> "Long-lost hours I mourn,
> Never, never to return."

I was in the habit of attending prayer-meetings; and on one Sabbath evening, having ascertained that there was to be a Methodist prayer-meeting in a private house in the neighbourhood, I determined to separate myself from my wild companions and go to it. After singing a hymn, the man who took the lead of the meeting said, "Let us all kneel down and pray;" and they all but myself kneeled. Finding myself the only one sitting, I, too, assumed a kneeling posture. Trembling instantly fell upon me from conviction.

This feeling increased during the meeting. After it was closed, a Methodist man followed me to the door, and with great tenderness besought me not to stifle my convictions. How he knew my state was a mystery to me; but I loved him much for his faithful dealing: and long after, I thought of him with no common degree of friendship, though he himself became a backslider.

During the year, I think, of 1822, I heard two sermons preached by the Rev. John Summerfield—both in one day; in the morning in the "Old Chapel," in Halsey-street, and in the evening in the "First Presbyterian Church," in Broad-street. In the morning, the house could not hold near all the people. I was in the gallery at an early hour. Mr. Summerfield had a youthful appearance, and yet he looked as though his heart and head had "far outgrown his years." He said in the commencement of his sermon, after a solemn pause, in which he looked down upon a mother in the congregation, with her noisy child, "If that child cannot be kept still, it must be taken from the house." His sermon was simple, and easy to understand. It was delivered in apparent sincerity, and with ease. While listening to him, I longed to be like him in everything.

In the evening, I was at an early hour near the pulpit, in the gallery of the large church, to hear him again. The house was soon filled, and he made his appearance in the pulpit. On either side of him sat an aged minister. He took his Hymn Book from his pocket, and read a hymn. It was announced by one of the choir that the hymn could not be found—it was not in the collection. Instead of Mr. Summerfield being embarrassed, he turned to the ministers in the pulpit, one of which was the pastor, and said: "Pardon me, kind friends, for not thinking of this. I should not forget that this evening the Methodists worship in a house opened for them by the kindness of a sister Church. Let this be remembered,—

> "O, for this love let rocks and hills
> Their lasting silence break!"

This occasioned much weeping in the congregation. A book was handed to him, and he went on with the exercises. The influence of his preaching upon me was for a time felt; but pleasures and amusements, or natural inclinations, soon were sufficient to drown my religious convictions.

# CHAPTER III.

## FIRST STEPS TOWARD SCEPTICISM.

There is a wilderness more dark
Than groves of fir on Huron's shore—
* * * * * *
The frightful wilderness of mind.—OSBORN.

THOUGHTS indulged, words spoken, and deeds performed in youth, all go to weave that web of character which the soul will have wrapped about it to wear forever. Of the divine inspiration of the Bible, and the truth of the Christian religion, I never had any strong doubts until I had resisted the influence of goodness and truth, and pursued a course of thought and conduct manifestly bad. Such doubts, when they came, were not the offspring of the love of truth, but of the "love of darkness."

If men could thrive in real excellence of moral character, as they advance in doubt, going on step by step in scepticism, toward the dark night of infidelity, they would, indeed, throw Christianity into an unenviable predicament, thereby proving it to be the opposite of all moral excellence. The reverse of this is the case. Doubts respecting revealed truth can never in an honest

heart be entertained with satisfaction. True, the Christian may be *oppressed* with doubtings, from which he seeks deliverance; and the more he turns his attention and his efforts to what is manifestly good, the sooner deliverance comes to him.

The steps that led me, by degrees, into scepticism were not at the time known to me to have such a tendency. Although I had never experienced religion, still I had felt that I ought to be "a follower of that which is good." I had never determined *not* to be such a follower! The way I pursued was a way of "erring from the truth." It was pursued in wild wanderings on the barren mountains of sin and folly, by carelessness, that "snare of the devil." How many, alas, are destroyed in youth by carelessness!

In my growing disregard for eternal things I was not alone. The humour of my fun-loving associates, while it strengthened me in pursuing a careless course, evinced that they also were in the "same condemnation." Our influence upon one another was mutual, keeping us in the downward road, by singing each other asleep concerning the care we should have felt over our souls' best interests, in the ominous words of the song,—

"*Begone, dull care!*
I pray thee, begone from me."

"Two cannot walk together except they be agreed;" and young people have their influence, as well as older folks. It goes from them in every direction, like insensible perspiration, and it must tell for either good or bad through all duration. And an influence to be exerted upon a young heart is no trifle; it is like putting a seal to warm wax. An impression then made is often carried in its effects through life into eternity, to await the test of the final judgment.

As I began to absent myself more and more from the places of public worship on the Lord's day, I had less and less fears about the probable consequences of sin. In fact, sin soon began to appear to be not so horrible a thing after all. It wore by degrees a more favourable aspect. Was not God, under some circumstances, I asked myself, willing for man to indulge his natural sinful appetites and passions? I soon began to discuss questions in my mind, with seeming composure, that a short time previous would have made me tremble. Having heard from the pulpit that "the more truth sinners hear, while not yielding to it, the worse they become;" and that ministers were "a savour of death unto death to those who heard them, and

still rejected the calls of saving mercy," I wrested such truths to my own injury, and held on to "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." They who attend regularly to the preaching of the word, should do it in sincerity, for their souls' good; and then they will have thrown around them a wholesome guard, which makes their condition better, certainly, than that of those who wilfully decline hearing the gospel preached at all. True, they will not be saved by the mere form, without the power; but they are more likely to become the subjects of saving grace, by such attendance on means, than by the want of it. Doubts of a pernicious character will soon poison the heart and darken the mind of such as disregard God's house and the ordinances that belong to it.

A want of due observance of the holy Sabbath, coupled with its desecration, was another evil step I took toward the gloomy region of scepticism. Although I never for profit laboured on the Sabbath-day, I was not guiltless with respect to its violation. At first I felt quite ill at ease in the employment of the sacred day, in walking the streets and rambling where duty did not call me; but after a while I could manage to calm my conscience with the plea that walking for diversion was not pursuing "any manner of work."

In this I met the concurrence of companions in sin. We strengthened each other's hands in pursuing what God had forbidden. Sabbath-breaking is a sin of vast enormity. It grieves the Spirit of God, and, therefore, hardens the heart. It greatly hinders the free course of God's word preached. It disturbs the quiet of community, aids intemperance, and adds many victims to the calendar of crime. It prepares the heart for doubting the truth of the divine word, and often calls down signal judgment upon the heads of obstinate offenders.

Looking with an evil eye upon the faults of professors of religion to form excuses for my own bad conduct, was another step in the SCIENCE of doubting those truths that support the Christian faith. Some professors of piety I was acquainted with, who came short of Bible requirement; and some I knew who had backslidden from true religion, apparently. Such characters I so viewed as to make their cases help me on in my scepticism. Looking at what I condemned as wrong, I made it the pretext for my justification in rejecting what was right. I should have said, "You faulty Christians! your deviations are not as good as what you depart from: I, therefore, will deviate from your course, and cleave to what you profess." Or to the backslider, "Your former

integrity was better than your present treachery to the cause of God: I, therefore, will follow the example of your integrity rather than of your apostasy."

What poor reasons has scepticism to rest upon! No rational foundation has ever been ascertained for the support of a single doubt respecting the truth of the Christian system. The evil of the natural heart, and the influence of Satan upon it, give support to sceptical doubts. Let but these be removed, and faith is made easy. God so lives in his truth "among men" that the awakened conscience feels him near; and doubting his truth is resisting his Spirit. It is then just that "he that doubteth is damned." There is no necessity of doubting; and violence is done to the feelings of sincerity in all cases of sceptical efforts to disbelieve God. Vices, like virtues, in this respect at least, are found in clusters. One vice does not take up its abode in the heart alone—it always has company. The name of sin is, therefore, "legion"—for it is "many."

A pernicious taste, and a fondness for reading works of fiction, tended also to keep my heart in a wrong direction. I had weekly access to the "Apprentices' Library," through the means of which I read some valuable works. Among them I might class the "Letters of the British

Spy," by the late Hon. William Wirt. This book greatly increased my desire after knowledge, as it gave me information of many things concerning the structure of the globe, the probable changes it has undergone from evidences upon its surface and far beneath it, that was to me entirely new. The eloquence of the "Blind Preacher," described in it, I can yet distinctly recollect, although I have not seen that first book I read of the "Apprentices' Library" for a quarter of a century. The library contained a judicious selection, and was under the control of prudent and pious officers. But I soon began to crave something more congenial with my depraved imagination, and I turned to novel reading; but I soon grew sick of it, and abandoned it with disgust forever.

Sometime about this period I saw and heard the eccentric Lorenzo Dow. He wore a curious mantle, made of skins, the fur outside. His beard swept his breast, and his long hair was parted, like a woman's, on the top of his head. He had a well-shaped face, a fair countenance, white and even teeth, small keen eyes, and a slender frame. His general appearance was solemn, and calculated to strike superstitious minds. His utterance was impeded by an asthmatic affection. He said many things in his sermons that

were true and good, and other things not so much calculated to edify. His remarks were often well-timed, but at other times of a character only to gratify the curious, and excite merriment. Once, looking down from a low pulpit upon a man in the altar, with his face upturned and mouth wide open, I saw Dow for a moment in fixed attention; then, with a changed countenance, as if he had caught a new idea, I heard him say to the congregation, "Such a sentiment—the one under discussion—is as inconsistent as if *that man were hungry*, [pointing to within an eighth of an inch of the man's mouth with his fore-finger,] *and I were to eat for him!*" On another occasion he spoke without taking a text, saying there was no Scriptural authority for such a course. At another time he commenced speaking thus: "G—d d——n your eyes, as a man once said to me, and gave me a kick which sent me two paces, *and pretty long ones, too*, for saying there was a thief in the congregation; and afterward it was ascertained that the man had stolen a trunk!" I have heard it stated on good authority, that on one occasion, while preaching in a barn belonging to the Rev. J. Hancock, in Morris County, New Jersey, Dow, standing near the door, turned round looking up, called aloud on Gabriel a number of times, then said: "I won-

der, if Gabriel would come now with a number of ropes to hang all of you here who indulge impure thoughts, how many of you would soon be seen dangling from these beams!" I have heard him, while *lying* in the pulpit-seat, with his feet higher than his head, sing his own composition in a manner not a little ludicrous. His influence upon me, on the whole, as a preacher of the gospel, was not favourable: and yet, in reading his life and early experience, I cannot doubt but that he was once a truly converted and called minister of Christ. With all his faults—and who has none?—he had his virtues; and he now "rests from his labours, and his works do follow him."

There were some others I could name, whose preaching had an influence upon me, sometimes, to soften my heart. They held their meetings in the Court-House. At these meetings I have wept with tender feelings; but, like the morning cloud and early dew, my feelings soon passed away, leaving me in a more doubtful state than ever. Like iron, the oftener heated, the more brittle it becomes.

Infidel-sentiments, uttered by persons older than myself, began to find in my hardened heart a welcome reception. Infidels, in greater numbers, became my intimate companions. In their

company, while their words did eat as doth a canker, I soon became so reckless in regard to the future that I astonished some of my former friends. How much harm are unsuspecting young men liable to, who breathe the foul contagion of infidel influence and example!

In the spring of 1824 my father, who about a year before had removed to Paterson, New Jersey, died after a short illness. I had not heard of his sickness until the intelligence of his death reached me. It was just in the dusk of evening when the man with a carriage arrived to convey three brothers, also apprentices, with myself, to Paterson to our father's funeral. It was a gloomy time with us. At the sad news, my youngest brother, William, then but a child, broke out in the most bitter crying and lamentation, and would not be comforted. As we started in the wagon, dark clouds were rising in the west. The heavens were soon clothed in black, and the thunder was loud and the lightning blinding. The rain drenched us, in our uncovered vehicle, and we were sad on that night of gloom—poor orphans, on their journey to the house of their mourning. Our insignificance did not mitigate our sorrow. We travelled slowly, not being able to see the road only when the lightning glanced upon it. Disheartened, we arrived quite late at

the house where lay our parent's cold remains, with our bereaved mother mourning with anguish over her loss! I looked around on the rude and scanty furniture in the silent room of death, and thought upon the last interview I had enjoyed with my father, and felt disconsolate beyond words to express. A sleepless night to me, and the funeral hour arrived. A sermon was preached by the Rev. Dr. Fisher, on John v, 28, 29. At the close of the discourse we proceeded, few in number, following the coffin, borne on men's shoulders, to the burial-ground, a little south of the town. As the coffin was descending to its last resting-place, the soil on one side of the grave gave way, and the two men on that side went down into the grave with the coffin against them. It was with some difficulty that they were extricated, as my father was a heavy man. All this time I stood by without weeping. It seemed my heart, through grief, was nearly petrified. When the grave was closed, we left the spot in sorrow, having buried a father, to see on earth his face no more forever.

When we returned to the room where he died, how lonesome did it appear; for he who was always so cheerful and glad when his children were around him, was not there! His chair was there, and his book, but his voice was not heard,

nor his smile seen. A vacancy was left there none other could fill up; and we had a lesson to teach us of the frailty of human life.

My mother, shortly after my father's decease, removed to Newark, New Jersey, to be among her children, where she abode the remainder of her days on earth.

The loss of my father did not, as one would suppose, turn my mind to the contemplation of eternal things. I was, if possible, more impenitent than before I endured the "sorrow that worketh death." A kind of misanthropy possessed me. My sympathies for mankind were frost-bitten by infidelity, and benumbed by what I suffered. The clod that is softened at a certain season, is hardened at another by the same sun. Unbelief in the heart changes, to that heart, all God's providential dealings into curses; while faith alone has the power, while working by love, to make to its possessor all things, in both providence and grace, "work together for good" in the present, and life eternal in the world to come.

## CHAPTER IV.

### SETTLING DOWN IN DEISM—THEN UNSETTLED.

> Pert infidelity is wit's cockade,
> To grace the brazen brow that braves the skies,
> By loss of being dreadfully secure.
>
> * * * * * * *
>
> For want of faith
> Down the steep precipice of wrong he slides:
> There 's nothing to support him in the right.
>
> YOUNG.

BELIEVING merely in the existence of a God who had never revealed his will to man, except in human "reason," and denying the Lord Jesus Christ, with his religion, and the inspiration of the Scriptures, the immortality of the human soul became to me a subject of doubtful and perplexing uncertainty. I was sitting down in the dark valley under the awful shadow of death. I was so left of God that I now could "believe a lie," because I had "pleasure in unrighteousness." But I was not so confirmed in my opinions as to be without misgivings. If I had been, I should have resembled no other sceptic that has ever lived. The rock of my infidelity was not like the Rock of the Christian—to bear me up: "Other foundation

can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

I have read Volney's "Travels in Assyria," and his "Ruins of Empires;" I have read Paine's "Age of Reason," and Palmer's "Principles of Nature;" the poetical works of Pope, Byron, and Shelley, with many others of like character. But the most injurious to me were the works of blind Palmer and Lord Byron. The insidious charm that lurks in the style of those writers—the subtlety and insinuating attractiveness of the beguiling serpent through them, have ensnared and ruined thousands. In reading Byron, I have been so fascinated at times, that it appeared I could not bend my will sufficiently to come within gun-shot of one important reality. It made me feel reckless of consequences; and I have felt at times almost willing, if the poet should be lost, to take up my abode also with him in hell, for the sake of his company! All this inspired me with a disposition and strength to make an openly-avowed denial of Jesus Christ, and the doctrines and truths of the Holy Scriptures.

In the winter of 1825 I was married to Miss Mary Thompson. Being then a deist, I did not broach the matter of my faith to my wife, who, though not a professor of religion, was strongly inclined to be one. In consequence of this, I

thought more of her than if she had been of my opinions. When I witnessed her apparent candour, while she would converse with her friends on the subject of religion, I felt half determined not to endeavour to shake her confidence: and I thought, even then, that I did not desire ever to see her less a Christian. In consequence of having a home, I did not mingle as much as I had done with my infidel associates. I also went oftener to places of public worship, in order to please my wife. But my reading suffered no abatement, and my deistical opinions still continued to spread their roots deeper in the soil of my depraved nature. My progress in the sentitiments I had imbibed, I presumed was owing to my advance in knowledge and more maturity in judgment.

I became interested in the study of astronomy. It gave a scope to my thoughts in meditation. When about eighteen years old, I heard a passer-by in the street say to his friend, that "China was nearly under us." Before that I had thought the earth an extended plain; but now it flashed upon me at once that the earth was round, like a chestnut-bur, and that *up* and *down* were *from* and *to* the centre of it. This step taken in "science," I went on until I knew a good deal of popular astronomy.

When my views of the works of creation became somewhat enlarged, I thought that we on earth were

"Too small for notice in the vast of being;"

and that the Son of God to die for the human race, when there were so many millions of worlds "immensely great" for whose inhabitants he did *not* die, was a supposition not consistent with reason. How I needed the "bright candle of the Lord" to give me true light! for the light in me had become great darkness.

I was passionately fond of poetry; and, after reading Pope's Homer—the "Iliad" and "Odyssey"—I was so filled with the fire of song that I sat down, one pleasant evening, and composed the following piece:—

IMMENSITY.

How small this globe, this world of human kind,
When opens the vast concave to the mind,
Where fields of argent light unbounded lie
Beyond the reach of telescopic eye;
Where worlds in swarms their endless circles run,
Each system balanced on its central sun!
Could fancy bold, with undiminish'd flight,
Far soar beyond all orbs in human sight;
Could still accelerate her onward course
Through star-gemm'd fields with unabated force—
Millions of systems pass'd, she 'd still behold
Myriads of tracts unnumber'd orbs unfold;

Suns after suns eternally would rise
To light her way through wide-expanded skies;
Nor, while eternal cycles roll their rounds,
Would ever fancy reach vast nature's bounds.
To thee, great God, and unto thee alone,
Are such profound, such deep arcana known!
'T is thine—not ours—thy work to comprehend—
Their centre, bounds, beginning, and their end.

The above first production of my poetic frenzy I slipped under the door of the printing-office; and to my trembling surprise it appeared in the next issue of the paper. It was soon followed by a number like it, which have had their day.

My mind was active and restless. Infidelity gave it no satisfaction. Had my heart been right with God, the poetry of Homer, Virgil, and Shakspeare would have done me no harm. Theatrical amusements allured and bewitched me for a time. I heard the chief actors and singers, and for a time was dazzled and bewildered. In my opinion, the theatre is one of the most formidable engines worked by the friends of Satan, to the destruction of good morals and human happiness in this world.

Politics engrossed much of my attention. Not that I desired to gain office. I never had a wish for any such responsibility. I desired to

oppose the influence of aristocracy, and what I thought was priestcraft. To this influence I thought there were many dupes; and I wished to see its shackles broken, that unrestrained liberty might be enjoyed. I published in the newspapers at the time a number of pieces on "religious intolerance," that I now would blush to read. They were an invidious attack on Christianity. I associated with a class of infidel politicians who were always prating about liberty! What liberty has infidelity to give to man? Such as it tendered through the guillotine in the days of its glory in France! I am well aware that while man remains a depraved being on earth, encroachments will be made upon the rights of the common people by wealthy aristocrats, political demagogues, and fanatical bigots, and that there is no better cure for such evils than real Christianity.

There were at that period religious friends who still thought of me. Two books were loaned to me by them, on condition that I would read them carefully. "Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful," and "Beattie on Truth." I read them with care. Their influence upon me was to induce a better state of *thinking* than politics had done. Still I met with the infidels at their place of gathering in the "Old Cadet Hall."

Here I heard a number of the champions of Deism hold forth *the words of death!*

On one occasion, in that "Hall," of a Sabbath afternoon, a young married man and his wife, from the city of New-York, having "come over to help us," gave me a specimen of what I might judge infidelity would lead to. After giving us an edifying address, the infidel orator and his companion repaired to the tavern—watched by me—and each took a glass of strong liquor at the bar, to give "fourth proof" testimony to the *genuine* character of their sentiments! I was glad the lady was not my wife, and that my wife was not an infidel.

I found that many of our leading men in Deism held to very liberal views respecting the marriage compact, not believing it favourable to our happiness; and that Bible-teaching was cruel and oppressive, because it interdicted promiscuous intercourse between the sexes, and thereby deprived man of his natural liberty. I felt sorry that Deism seemed to lead to such consequences, as I heartily despised, and meant to despise all licentiousness.

I next went to hear preaching by the Universalists. They did not hold to such outrageous sentiments respecting matrimony; and I did not know but I might come into their views: but I

soon felt disgusted with their pretensions to be religious. They gave me no evidence that they believed the Bible to be God's word, more than I believed it myself. I hated hypocrisy; and their preaching reforms no person, and is altogether unnecessary. Many of my acquaintances were Universalists; but they were no more changed in heart than I was. I have known them to go to some "rum-hole" place of refreshment, or the tavern where I was, and heard them applaud the sermon they had just heard from their favourite preacher, with an oath, and then take a glass of rum, swearing they did not believe there was a hell!

Through the solicitations of some of my better friends I joined the "Young Men's Society." This association was based upon good principles, and many of its members young men of promise, who have since realized the high expectations then indulged. The vigour of intellect displayed by some of those young men threw my infidel friends into the shade.

Having taken a more sober view of the effects of infidelity, in contrast with those of religion, I was better prepared to judge between them. I began to think that men might be well informed, candid, and upright, and still be Christians! I became less severe in my strictures, from time to

time, on professors of religion. One of my infidel acquaintances, whose name I shall not mention, I watched closely. He had the consumption, and I resolved, if possible, to see how he would die. He was a man of much reading and ingenuity. He had often said in my hearing that dying, he was sure, would be an easy affair with him! He said he knew himself so well. The scene of the last afternoon visit I paid him is still fresh in my recollection. He was alone in the room, and in bed, when I entered. On the mantlepiece lay a book much soiled and worn. It was the "Age of Reason,"—his favourite soul-diet! He knew me well, and often in a jocular way had said, "John, by G—d, I'll show you how to die one of these days!" He now lay there, a ghastly spectacle before me, about to die! I said, "Friend, I am sorry to see you so low; but I see by the book on the shelf that you still stick to your integrity. He raised himself up in the bed, and stretched out his naked arm of skin and bone; and with hollow eyes and glassy, and thin lips, drawn over teeth that showed a death-like grin, he said: "Do you think that God will burn such a d—d arm as this, in hell? No! but I wish there was a hell, to burn such men in as ——, the Presbyterian hypocrite; for he has not been to see me since I've been sick!" He then

turned in the bed with his face to the wall, and his back toward me, evidently not desiring then *to show me how to die!* A day or two after this he died; and I never yet have had a desire to die like him!

I was desirous of being right in matters of conscience; and so far as honesty and benevolence extended, I approved, admired, and practised them. An abatement in my zeal in the infidel cause was observed; and my friends suspected a secret intention on my part to become a Christian. This was then so far from my expectation, that I gave them my word that if ever anything like it occurred, they might accuse me of self-interest in the matter. For fear of incurring the suspicion of seriousness, I often went to excesses in an opposite direction. While the Methodist Episcopal Church in Franklin-street was about being finished, and the workmen were inside, one day I walked up into the pulpit, and buttoned my coat up to my chin, with my hair combed over my forehead, and there, in solemn mimicry, went through the character of a Methodist preacher, to the gratification of "my hearers!" For this I was cuttingly reproved by an infidel friend, as also by my own conscience.

On a pleasant lot, not more than one hundred and fifty yards from where the Wesleyan Insti-

tute now stands, I built a house, and my prospects were tolerably fair in temporal matters. I appropriated one room in the house to the business of shoe-making. There was in it a little more room than I needed, and I prevailed on a Methodist neighbour, a shoemaker, to take a seat in it. "As he had," I said, "an overstock of faith, it would counterbalance my unbelief." This man took me once to a general class-meeting; and a brother remarked in his prayer that there was "an Achan in the camp;" and I felt highly insulted, as I thought I was the reprehensible individual pointed out: but this was not the case.

One summer afternoon a storm arose; and my solemn Methodist friend remarked that it made him always feel serious to hear loud thunder. The thunder and lightning on the present occasion were awful; and I felt like endeavouring to frighten my friend. Just as the sound of a loud clap of thunder was dying away, I took up a bright-bladed knife, and held it toward the window, and said, "*There, crack away at that!*" Instantly a flash and a dreadful peal came together, with a smell of sulphur, nearly stunning my senses! I turned around, and they had all left me alone, declaring their dread of remaining with one who would act so daringly. I was

then conscious that God had rebuked my temerity with a thunder-peal; and I made a promise that I never would do the like again, and desired to have my life spared a little longer.

A Mr. Vanderpool, a pious young man, who has since gone to his reward, once said to me in conversation: "Do you believe, sir, if called now to the judgment, that you could in candour say that you have done all in your power to become acquainted with Christ and his religion?" After a pause, I plainly told him I did not think I could. "Then," said he, "would it not be just that you should be punished for your neglect?" Shortly after, walking in a clover-field alone, I thought there might be truth in the Bible doctrines; and there might be a hell, where I might at last arrive, and find no pleasant clover-fields to walk through. I then felt so displeased with God that I looked up in a rage, and said: "Why did I come into existence? Now send me to hell, then, and I'll bear it!" In a moment I reflected on what I had done, and in a profuse perspiration shuddered with dread!

In company with a number of pious persons, who were conversing on the providences of God, I said, "Gentlemen, I do not believe at all in your notions of God's interferences in our affairs; and I will take my own case to prove that there

is no other cause of our prosperity than our own industry and good management. I *will* prosper in my business, in *spite* of that Providence you with so much confidence speak of."

Notwithstanding my state, many took an interest in my welfare. I received tracts and letters from pious friends. One letter, from a pious uncle in Ireland, I deem worthy of making a few extracts from. It is in reply to letters in support of deistical sentiments, received from me at the time.

"ARMAGH, IRELAND, *Oct.*, 1829.

"MY DEAR JOHN,—I believe I would not now embrace this opportunity of writing to you, were it not for the particular wish I have to give you my candid opinion on that part of your letter relating to theology. My reasons, arguments, and conclusions you may deem impertinent and warm; but as long as the Almighty shall permit reason to direct my thoughts, I humbly trust, with the aid of divine grace, it will confirm the hope I cherish. My conviction is settled concerning the truth of the blessed gospel of Jesus Christ. I do most firmly believe that such as have pretended, or may pretend to reject this gospel, have done so, and will do so, on account of its purity, and a perverse principle in our nature, 'which is enmity against God.'

"You say you 'cannot comprehend,' &c., &c. Your comprehension is not required. I ask you, Can you comprehend your own existence—your body in combination with your soul? If you can, you are the only one of the race. As you profess to believe that you have a soul, where did you acquire the knowledge on which to rest your belief? You may answer, From the general opinion of the philosophers. Where did they receive their knowledge of the immortality of the soul? By tradition, you say; and from whom? Why, from the inspired patriarchs of the Old Testament Scriptures, whose lives were antecedent to the work of any author or philosopher. As to comprehension, indeed, we may comprehend the proximity of corresponding members, or parts of a whole, by the aid of the sciences; we may vaguely calculate the distances of the planets from each other, and the velocity of their courses; but what conclusions can we draw from hence? Why, that the incomprehensibility of the works of God should humble our pride.

"There is a revelation of God in the Bible, and why should we quarrel with the Father of the universe for the manner in which he has seen good to make it. The Scriptures are proved, by incontestable evidence, to be divinely inspired, by the exact fulfilment of prophecy. The rise and

fall of empires are recorded by historians who never heard of these prophecies. Christ's predictions concerning Jerusalem have been so wonderfully fulfilled as to show him to be all he claimed to be—God!

* * * * * * *

"Could it be possible that a few simple men would offer their lives as a sacrifice to give what they knew to be false the appearance of truth? And their Master suffered death for what he advanced as truth, after he had proved his mission, by his miracles, his resurrection, and ascension, to be from God. . . . .

"Man is also conscious of depravity and transgression, as peculiar to his spoiled nature. He may as clearly know his pardon and acceptance, through the atonement and intercession of Jesus Christ, as he knows he has offended God. By faith he may be enabled to call God, Abba, Father; to receive the promised Comforter; to correct every wrong temper, and be created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works.

"These remarks flow from the conviction of the truth and goodness of the choice I have made. My ears have been accustomed to such arguments as yours ever since I was a boy; and I must confess I look at them all as gross nonsense. Atheists have a more tenable ground to

stand on than the most subtle deists. They—deists—have formed a code of opinions from the very oracles they pretend to reject.

"Your former remarks on the 'variety of opinions existing among classes professing Christianity,' afford no proof of the invalidity of the Scriptures, any more than the variety of physiognomy proves that the human family are not the offspring of one common father. . . . .

"So, my dear John, I now close my remarks on your rash and dangerous creed with this one observation: Deists admit that strict morality is pleasing to God. Now, I ask, what system of morality so exalted—so sublime—as that inculcated by Christianity! If the Christian has the right side of this tremendous question—and his very thoughts may be directed into channels of Heaven's own appointment—O, how awful must be the final state of those who wilfully reject and despise the gospel of the ever-blessed Son of God!

"I remain your ever affectionate uncle,

"DAVID SCARLETT."

The letter of my uncle had for a time some effect upon me; but I soon forgot the impressions it made upon my mind.

During the revival of 1830–31, in Newark,

I encountered some converts who somewhat interrupted my peace. One, especially, who had been a noted Universalist; and his change excited some surprise. I said to him, "Well, Lewis, you have come out bright I hear." He answered, with tears flowing down his cheeks: "Friend John, you are on a stormy sea, without a sail, rudder, or compass,—you know not to what port you are bound." His words hurt my feelings, and partially unsettled my carnal quiet; and I wrote some pieces, which were published in a New-York newspaper, against revival operations, and in ridicule of the Methodists.

In the year 1832 the Asiatic cholera sent many of our citizens suddenly from this scene of mortality. An infidel friend was taken with it, and I tried to comfort him by ridiculing religion. I joked about death; and in the middle of the night after, I rose from my bed with dreadful fears that I had the cholera myself. I then felt like praying instead of joking.

Sometime after this I heard the Rev. Charles Pitman preach in the church in Franklin-street; and he so tore to pieces my "refuge of lies," that my anger boiled over. My brother David sat in the seat with me; and he, with many others, wept under the sermon, in audible sobs. I whispered in his ear—thrusting my elbow into his

side—that he was a fool for manifesting such weakness! I never was more enraged at a preacher than at that time I was at Mr. Pitman; and I wrote that afternoon a piece strongly animadverting on his sermon, to be published in a paper that had been used by me for such purposes before—but it never appeared.

# CHAPTER V.

## CONVERSION.

Genuine conversions are always sudden.—Olin.

The change I experienced in my heart—with its connexion throughout my moral and spiritual nature—I must ever view as the most wonderful exhibition of the mercy of God ever made to me. In that radical change, wrought by the Holy Ghost, I was, indeed, brought from darkness to light. Jesus the Mediator, and a reliance on his atonement by faith, were the procuring cause and condition by which it was accomplished. And no man *can* look on my conversion with the same feelings that I do. If God had, in my sight, for my gratification, created a thousand worlds, and sent them all glowing with beauty on their tireless rounds, it would not have equalled the astonishment and delight I felt when he spake my sins all forgiven. Then did his Spirit

"In my spirit shine,
As shines a sunbeam in a drop of dew,—

the same Spirit that shall reanimate my body on the coming resurrection morn!

During the summer of 1831, or 1832, I think, there was some alarm spread concerning a comet that was then visible in the heavens. A pamphlet was published on the subject of its dangerous approach to the earth, and its probable collision with our world. This exciting subject was used to frighten sinners to repentance. I had not the least confidence in the assumed truth of that which was made the cause of alarm. I was disgusted with such attempts to make converts to religion. Does Christianity, I asked, need help from such sources? How flimsy must be its foundation, if motives to urge its requirements upon us must be sought in such dubious conjectures. With such a view of the subject, I felt a desire to do something to counteract the bad tendencies of the alarm. At a public meeting, held by the infidels, I chose to speak out my sentiments—holding the offensive pamphlet in my hand. Professors of religion had afforded me ground to occupy in opposing them. I said that "the elements of comets, and the laws of motion, as far as they are known, would not warrant the supposition for a moment that destructive consequences might, through the force of a collision, ensue to our earth; that the whole matter was got up for effect; and that the alarming party did not themselves believe what

they asserted." Then I ridiculed religion as being altogether based on falsehood, like that alarm contained in the pamphlet. Before I got through, an infidel, with a nose fiery and fat, rose on his feet, and, with an oath, vociferated, "It takes him! it takes him!" at the same time snapping his finger and thumb over his head in triumph. The kind of applause I received, and the suspicious source from whence it emanated, made me resolve, while yet standing, to mingle with infidel meetings, for the purpose of the promotion of their cause, no more, while I should live.

The meeting was held in the long-room of a tavern. I had, before I commenced my harangue, taken a glass of brandy as a suitable stimulant on the occasion. At the close of my speech I became somewhat sobered; and having resolved to give up such business, as of bad tendency, I immediately took my leave of the place, and walked leisurely alone, meditating on my way home.

The thoughts that occupied my mind, after I had retired from the bustle and confusion of the meeting, were, no doubt, influenced by the Spirit of God. I have never in my life, to my knowledge, doubted the fact of the being of a God; but I denied his recorded revelation to man, and the divinity and gospel of his Son. That there

is a God, the entire operations of a moving universe proclaim; and I admitted all. It now struck me with force, that this Great Being, whatever might be the extent of his revelation, could not be totally indifferent to the affairs of men, and character of human actions. The Christian's thoughts and actions I now looked upon as very different from those of infidels. And God most evidently must be more pleased with those of one party than with those of the other; for both classes cannot be equally in his favour, on the principle of divine consistency. Certainly, two opposite characters cannot be alike acceptable to God.

In looking over the ground occupied by the Christian world, on points of difference between it and the infidel world, I saw evident marks of goodness on it that did not appear on the ground of its opponents. Efforts to promote learning, civilization, good feelings, and right principles in morals, appeared to be put forth by Christians in public and in private, as the fruit of Bible influence. Such efforts infidels did not find it in their hearts to make. The field of infidel-cultivation to my eye presented no growth but "thorns and thistles;" no landscape of "living green,"—no spot of sunshine,—no oasis in its wilderness, nor limpid stream to refresh the weary traveller on his journey through life. No fra-

grance of blooming flowers, wafted by the healthful breezes of heaven, to gladden the heart of the infidel on his way to the judgment. Now, could a good God be the wise originator and inspirer of such a course of desolation, in preference to the Christian system? Rich with every treasure needed by man, bright with every moral excellence, ennobling in soul-dignifying power, glorious with God's grace, and inviting with its "trees of generous fruit," and "feast of fat things," could the gospel scheme, and those giving proper heed to it, be regarded by our Maker of less value and importance than infidelity? My conscience found it easier to answer such a question than my heart.

After having reached home, I retired to an upper-room, in order to be alone with my reflections. I continued in deep meditation. The old abused Bible, much of which had been used for waste paper, lay near me on the stand. I grasped its torn remains, and thought of its once bleeding Author. A burden lay upon my heart; and sighs of sorrow gave vent to my feelings, while I attempted to trace some of its pages. I had often read "that good old Book of Life," with motives not like those which now actuated me. Toward the great subject of its united testimony I felt moved by supernatural agency.

Its origin, authority, and gracious design now appeared to me more than human.

The name of Jesus, as I repeated it to myself, seemed a "wonderful" name; there was power in it to me that I in a measure realized. I wondered at it, but could not comprehend its deep meaning. I tried to compare it with other great names; but it was, indeed, "above every name." There was a deep mystery in its effect upon me; and who could explain it? Moses, David, Isaiah, and Daniel, I could articulate and repeat; but the name of Jesus did not sound like them. They are the names of mere men; and have not in them the Son of God, to make them, when uttered, strike the mind of sincerity with divine force. Socrates, Seneca, and Washington, I uttered in audible whispers; but the name of Jesus —having originated with God, and not with man—was not like them in its influence. It made its own impression on my spirit. It arrayed my inward thoughts before its all-seeing presence, uncovering before its inspection my conscience and my sins. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." "Name to sinners dear!"

The Scriptures had long appeared to me like an immense mass of ponderous lumber, which I could not measure,—a boundless field, which I

could not at a glance explore,—an unknown ocean, whose depths I could not sound. The interests of my immortality I considered too great to trust to the capricious whims of mankind. I must have a revelation from God alone, or I could not be satisfied. The Bible lay open before me, and I now began to tremble at the word; but the word of man would not do to prove to me the infallible truth of God's word. Man had erred and lied; and he might err and lie again! How could I be fully assured that the Bible contains a copy of God's own thoughts? What method could I successfully pursue to a final settlement of this important question? That there is something of peculiar excellence in the Bible, distinguishing it from all other books, is most certain; but must that peculiar something be the only evidence by which I am to be assured of its divine inspiration? Is the "copyright" of its divinity's revealed evidence with the learned, through whom it is to flow down to the ignorant, making the salvation of the ignorant depend on the learned? Is the strongest proof of its supernatural claim at best but a favourable conjecture? Such were some of my thoughts while I was longing for the "true light."

A work on the evidences of Christianity, by a

noted writer, named Charles Bonnet,* of Geneva —who lived in the days of Voltaire, and was a successful champion in defence of the truths assailed by the noted infidel—fell into my hands, and was the means, in the hands of God, of convincing my mind of the certainty of the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Bonnet's manner of handling the subject was to me somewhat new. He brought all the objections that have been made to this fact recorded by inspiration. He arrayed them against the proof that supports it; and there were many that I had not thought of before. The question was before me, as if "weighed in a balance." The evidence of this divinely-asserted fact preponderated. Things appeared to me that could not be removed out of

* In a tract (No. 143, on the Catalogue) entitled "The Conversion of a Deist," this name is erroneously printed "Bennett." I have not seen the book alluded to in eighteen years, having given the one I had to an infidel going to cross the Atlantic for his health—he being in a consumption—hoping it would do him as much good as it had done me. I have heard that Bonnet was a "Restorationist;" be that as it may, I would not give countenance to that absurdity by referring to Bonnet's argument in proof of our Lord's resurrection. I think that Free Redemptionists, in their belief, are more absurd, if possible, than the Universalists.

the way, making it absolutely impossible to avoid absurdity in denying this fact. I reasoned with myself thus: "Here is an evident truth, of inconceivable importance, brought to my apprehension. I will now hold this belief, as founded on fact, although my feelings should rise up against it; and I will hold it publicly as well as privately." This inward, sincere assent to the truth of revelation brought with it an awful alarm; for it led me to this conclusion: that if Christ is risen from the dead, he will come again on earth to judge the world, and I feel an entire want of preparation to meet him on such an occasion of final settlement.

The resurrection of Christ proves also the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. If Jesus is now alive, he is indeed all that he claimed to be, according to those writings that "testify of him;" and, therefore, must have fully comprehended all the Old Testament. He knew all those books that were claimed to be of divine authority, in their exact meaning, scope, and design. That he would have detected error, and exposed it, had it been found in the books, is fairly deducible from his character. In his quotations from them he has given his sanction to them in his own teachings. The divinity of the Old Testament admitted, the New Testament follows; for it is

an essential fulfilment of the Old-Testament prophecies, and the New-Testament claim to divine authority is as good as the Old. It is an inspired record of the resurrection of Christ, and stamps with truth all the doctrines connected with that fact. The truth thus admitted of the New, that of the Old Testament must also follow, as an unavoidable consequence. They both, by their intimate relation to, and connexion with each other, prove their emanation from one common source. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the keystone of the mighty arch that spans the whole system of human redemption, and gives combination and solidity to the several parts. Such, as far as memory serves, was my view of the subject, after reading the book of the Genevese author.

I met with David Young, the New-Jersey astronomer, and being somewhat perplexed in my mind to account for the apparent discrepancy between astronomical truth and the miracle of the sun standing still at the command of Joshua, I shortly after my introduction to him inquired: "Mr. Young, may I ask you, are you a believer in the infallible truth of the Bible?" "I am, sir," was his reply. "Please, then, tell me, sir," said I, "whether it was the sun or the earth that stood still at Joshua's command." "It was

most probably the earth," he replied. "Would not, then, sir, such a sudden check in the earth's rapid motion cause the Atlantic to rush over the Alleghany Mountains?" "It would, sir, have done so, if God's method had been like that of a finite creature. If a man should run with his head against a tree, or any other solid material, the point where his head would come in contact with the tree would be bruised, because the check to the motion of the whole body would be in one small place. But the power of God, exerted so as to operate in an all-pervading manner, reaching to every part and particle at once, could stop the earth without interruption to the ocean; as the head would be entirely uninjured, on a supposition that the impediment opposed to the motion of the body could be made to reach every particle of the entire matter of the body at once. The language used on the occasion, 'the sun stood still,' was according to common custom,—as we still say the sun rises or sets, when he appears to do so from the rotary motion of the earth." His explanation was satisfactory.

A short time previous to this period I had taken the "Temperance Pledge," which led to increased soberness of thought. I never was a drunkard, and never drank to what the world calls excess; but I became a temperance man,

in order to guard against the probability of a future evil. To hear a man say that he is not afraid of contracting the appetite to drink intoxicating liquors, when he is tampering with the matter, is like hearing a person say he is not afraid of taking a contagious disease, while in the midst of dying victims to it, and no precautionary measures are taken to avoid its infection. I was induced to take this step of safety by hearing an able address on the subject of temperance, in the Third Presbyterian Church in Newark, New-Jersey, by Mr. Mackay. This gentleman proved so convincingly the pernicious effects of alcohol upon the human system, that I resolved to abandon the use of it at once; and, therefore, the next morning I hastened directly, with determination, and called on Mr. Bond, who had the pledge of the society, in order to sign my name to it. I soon found that I could not be consistent without exerting an influence on others in favour of temperance. This made some of my old infidel friends and companions withdraw their warm (heated by rum) affections from me. It also led some new Christian friends to draw nearer to me.

I met with disappointments in pursuit of happiness. With a partially awakened mind, conscious of the possession of an immortal soul, and active, darkling, I wandered in quest of repose.

To cease to think was impossible; and to think the thoughts of infidelity was to endeavour to place my mind where no immovable foundation could give it support. I loved conversation, and used to spend much of my time in talking with congenial spirits; and I believe, in this respect, I was more under the power of truth than if I had preserved a hermit-like silence on the subject. The unsociable, solitary, misanthropic infidels, are the most incorrigible to be met with.

Returning home late one Saturday night, with a social infidel companion from a place of public resort, where we had as usual been discussing the great subjects of national interest, I shall never forget the conversation introduced by him. Poor man! I fear the grave found him before repentance. It was a windy night, and the moon was approaching the western horizon. The depth of night's stillness reigned, and dark shadows of the flying clouds glided by us along the pavement as our footsteps alone, of all the busy multitudes that had thronged the streets during the day, "marked time," to be mourned over in after years. The echoing foot-fall, mingled with the moaning blast in midnight notes of discontent, gave signs of encroachment on the Sabbath's early morn. Wrapping his cloak about him, my friend sighed in heaviness of heart. He was,

generally, one of the most jovial of fun-making fellows. What could extort a sigh from him? Had he caught the spirit of sorrow from his companion? As we arrived at the place of our parting, he stopped, and with emotion said: "John, would it not be better for us to be like some of our neighbours—religious, and more regular in our habits?" I paused, looking at him, thinking he might be in fun; but I found him in real earnest. "Why, sir," said I, "such thoughts have occupied my mind lately, more than usual." He remarked again: "My little daughter hurt my feelings the other morning. She said to her mother, 'I wish father would read the Bible, and pray every day, like Mr. —— does!' What could have put it into her mind to say such things?"

After we parted I found my mind much wrought upon. My friend had a pious mother, and some most respectable relatives. His talents were of a high order, and his colloquial powers were superior. He was also an orator, and many have been delighted to hear him at political gatherings. Generous and warm-hearted, with wit and lively powers of imagination, his company was always greeted in the social circle of festivity, merriment, and song. I highly esteemed his friendship; and now he was moved

upon to become religious. I hoped that the time would soon come when I, too, would be a better man; but there seemed to stand in my way a great barrier. I had made a declaration —as has been stated—that "I would have prosperity in spite of the prevalent notions of the superintendence of Divine Providence." Soon after that declaration I had, in a gloomy state of mind, sold my little place for much less than it was worth, so that I was now somewhat involved in debt. I dated the rapid decline of prosperity in my temporal affairs from the very day of my rash and blasphemous declaration! I feared now that God had abandoned me to myself, that I might be a salutary warning to others.

The most gloomy period of my life was, perhaps, during the autumn and winter of 1832. My health was impaired from the force of mental anguish, and my means of temporal support were scanty. On every hand my way was hedged up. My sleep was broken, and my nights were spent in weary wakefulness. My days were filled with anxiety and corroding care. The clouds of an unfriendly world darkened around me, and I was cold and friendless in the driving storm. I looked upon the quiet stars, and tried to hold companionship with them—those far-off isles of light. The moon's cold smile, too, I courted, as

it came to me in lonely hours. I feared that poverty would one day come upon a growing family in its extreme form; and I would rather not have existence at all, than to have it under such circumstances. In God I had not yet learned to put my trust, and I had no one to depend on. Then was I indeed sad; my suffering was great. My life was a burden to me, and I was weary with dragging its lengthening chain. Then the good people gave me tracts to read, while my bread was procured with difficulty; and I read them with a better appetite than when I had bread enough.

During the early part of January, 1833, I went one Sabbath evening, through the importunity of a Methodist neighbour, to hear a sermon by the presiding elder, in the Methodist Episcopal Church, in Halsey-street. I had spent a day of darkness and despondency, and preferred to walk alone to the church. I shall never forget the heavy thoughts, that like lead sank into my soul, as in pensive loneliness I made my way to the house of God. On entering, I selected a seat on the south side, next the wall, near the pulpit. I looked up, and there sat the Rev. Charles Pitman, the minister with whom I had been so dissatisfied some several months previous. I now was glad to see him there; and desired most

earnestly to hear him preach the word of life to me. The exercises were scarcely commenced before I felt the Spirit of God was there. The voice of the preacher was loud and clear, and indicated that he was not endeavouring to manœuvre it by oratorical tact; but was giving manifestation, in words and actions, of a heart carried heavenward in a "chariot of fire." His text was, "Beginning at Jerusalem,"—and what a text to make a beginning in my life! Never before had the truth of Christ's religion appeared so clear to me, —never before the mercy of God so great. While the preaching came to me in heart-swelling emotion, boldness, and burning words, my heart was affected in the right way. Had a cold didactic discourse been read to me, I might have been worse off for wasting the time in listening to it; but the demonstration of the Spirit accompanied the preaching that evening to my heart, and I made immediate efforts to pray. I found it difficult; there was an agency against me in my attempts to approach God in this way. My thoughts were at first all confusion, like a swarm of bees! The mental rambling and distraction I then experienced, I now believe to have been occasioned by Satanic influence. My mind, after persevering effort, became fixed; and I prayed for a divine communication to my soul. I

desired that God would convince me in his own way, and bring me to the knowledge of the truth. A sudden trembling seized me. There was a peculiar indescribable tremor, which seemed to be in my very heart's core, and shot in quivering chillness throughout my whole frame! Big drops of cold perspiration broke from my forehead, and I felt them running down my face. I turned round to a Methodist friend that sat next me, and said, "Osborn, I feel very bad! I cannot stay here." I immediately rose to leave the house before the preacher had finished his sermon. I left, because I was afraid of being converted that night; and I wanted longer time to deliberate on the matter, as I considered it a serious thing to be converted. What power the devil has over us if we yield to his devices! I might have been that night happily converted to God, had I not left the house. A little persuasion from the lips of my friend might have kept me there; and I would not have been left to such sufferings of mind as I endured after this, for nearly six months, before I was blessed with the pardon of my sins through atoning blood. After leaving the house I had a desire to return. From some cause my friend, who had left with me, did not wish to accompany me back, and I wandered off, alone, some distance into a neigh-

bouring field. There was some snow in places on the ground, and the night was cold. The moon shone brightly at times; and the hurrying clouds before the sighing wind, like my harrowed spirits, would by spells intercept the light—not unlike the lights and shadows that alternately flitted across my mind. O, what a solemn evening was that to me! I thought of the sermon I had just heard. The preacher's earnest appeals rung in my ears. The truths of God's saving mercy were repreached to me by the Spirit. As I walked about from place to place, thinking of Jesus in heaven pleading for me, I desired to obtain the consent of my mind to kneel down there alone and pray; but there was a fear that I might fall into a trance, and freeze to death!

At a late hour I went home, and found my family asleep. I retired to bed, but could not sleep. In the morning I was astonished to find that my neighbours were apprised of the fact of the exercises of my mind, and the strange conduct I had manifested before the whole congregation, in Halsey-street Church, on the previous evening.

Never for one moment, from that period, have I doubted the divinity of the Bible, nor the truth of the religion of its Author; but the mere believing thus far—giving a cold assent to reve-

lation, in an abstract manner—was not accompanied with saving grace to my heart. I remained in an unregenerate state, nowithstanding the change my mind had undergone. I respected Christians, although I feared them. There was a fearful impression that rested upon my mind that I was one of the doomed, the bare recollection of which is still accompanied with a tinge of melancholy. I hated the sentiments of infidelity, and avoided the society of those tinctured with them. The sophistry by which they entangle their victims, by inducing them to answer questions of their asking, I dreaded. Truth requires not subtlety to maintain it; but error ensnares by stealthy steps, blinding, as there is an approach to it, until the mind becomes quite dark, prepared for its residence.

I met with my old infidel friend at a public store; but he was not in the state of mind he was in on the night he told me of the hurt state of his feelings, because of his little daughter's desire that he would read the Bible and pray like his pious neighbours. He immediately commenced an attack upon me, accusing me of having been deluded by the Rev. C. Pitman's eloquence. "Religion," he said, "is all a chimera, and professors are bewildered in their

imaginations." Pointing to a recently painted portrait of Mr. J—— B——, the storekeeper, that stood behind the counter, he said: "That painting is the work of a skilful artist; it is calculated to deceive; it puts me in mind of your Bible and your religion. Like this deceptive picture, they may to you have the semblance of truth, as *it* has of substance and life, when they have nothing but illusive representations through an ingenious arrangement of light and shade. That picture professes to be a reality, when it is nothing but a pleasant deception; and so it is also with the Bible and its religion." I replied: "I think the portrait is not claimed to be more than a faithful and true picture of the original, and not the original himself. It professes to show merely where the features of the original would be, and what they would be, were they in its place. And the Bible, with its religion, is claimed to be the inspired production of God, with design, as much so as the portrait is claimed to be the work of art with design. But no real deception is in either case intended; nor will any be ever deceived by either that picture or the Bible, if common-sense be the rule to judge."

There were some well-meaning Christians who took me to be a converted man, because I would argue in favour of Bible religion, and

would weep, occasionally, while speaking on the subject. The fact is, I took the side of Christianity out of fear that the displeasure of God would be still more felt by me than it was, if I did not. True, I believed it to be from God, but did not enjoy it. I wept because of sorrow of heart that the wrath of God was abiding on me. I was told that I must look for wretchedness, as Paul declared himself a "wretched man." But I read that "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." I was determined if possible, not to be deceived by any false hope.

Under fear of the "wrath to come," I dragged along sorrow's "lengthening chain." I pined away to a mere skeleton, under the awful forebodings of an awakened conscience. The approaching spring brought no charm with it to my torn breast. I was now approaching the age of thirty; and the days of youthful follies, sinful pleasures, and wasted opportunities were unrolled by the long scroll of memory to my view. The thought of growing old was grievous to one whose views had been so long bounded by the horizon of this present world. Then, the "long-lost hours" were mourned in fruitless regrets. That life that had floated through sweet hours, forever gone, was beyond recall. The gloomy day of a father's burial, when few

were the strangers that gathered with the obscure, bereaved ones, at the grave of a beloved parent, whom my eyes were to see no more, drew its pall over my spirits; and I thought on the promises I had made to God, in tears, while hearing his word preached by the long-remembered, sainted Lybrand and Summerfield. I pondered the past sad hours spent in loneliness among the graves of the dead, on moonlight evenings, when no eye saw me but God's, with no hope of immortality, thinking that there the fire of mind must be quenched forever; that there I must go down and lie ere long, and know not the stones or pebbles that shall be made companions of my coffin; that there the checkered scenes of cloud and sunshine must come and go, but I shall heed them not; that the snow-drift and the summer's calm, the tempest's howl at midnight, and the morning song of birds, will continue, with the rolling tide of living generations, but the pale nations never wake again into conscious being. Such were the spectres of the past that haunted me, and like "wandering ghosts" flitted through my brain.

During the early part of the summer of 1833, a camp-meeting was held by the Methodists within a little more than two miles of my residence. I had never in my life attended a camp-

meeting, having been opposed to such meetings altogether. On Wednesday, of the camp-meeting week, I came to a full stand to engage no more in any secular business until I had made all possible efforts to save my soul. I was teaching school at the time; and on the last Wednesday in June I dismissed my school at noon, not to meet again until the next Monday morning. About one o'clock of that day I started on foot, and alone, for the camp-ground. I met one of my old infidel associates before I had gone far, who inquired "where I was going?" I told him "to camp-meeting." He wondered "why I wanted to go there?" "To seek religion, and to obtain that peace from God I felt the need of," was my reply. He responded, "Success to you," and with a loud and scornful laugh proceeded on his way, while I pursued mine. He soon after left his wife and children, enlisted in the United States Army—while I enlisted in that of King Jesus—deserted, and became a dissipated vagrant, carrying out in practice his scoffing principles!

I walked on alone, meditating by the way. The depravity exhibited by my old friend gave additional proof of the need of religion. How true it is that no man can do harm to others without first doing harm to himself! I quickened

my pace as I took my way toward the camp-ground. It was in the rosy month of June, and nature was dressed in her richest robes. As I left the noise of the city behind, I was the more absorbed in thought on the goodness of God as it appeared in his works. It was a little before the afternoon preaching commenced when I first beheld the tents, contrasting their whiteness with the green foliage of the tall trees. But when I heard the earnest prayers of God's people, I felt pride in my heart rebelling against God. It is not natural for man to worship in a right manner the true God. While standing in front of the large tent, my nearest neighbour, being in the tent, came out, and took hold of me by the coat-collar, and said: "O, John! you know you feel bad; and we have been praying for you for some time; and we mean to pray for you still. Now come along to the mourners' bench." With saying which he pulled me violently into the tent, weeping aloud the while. His tears and his bodily strength prevailed. His feelings were so powerful that I feared to resist them. I knew that there must be something of real importance that could make that man of blunt honesty cry over me as he did! As I yielded to his importunity, I thought of the fact of once hearing him pray for me in secret, when he knew not that I was

near him. I kneeled down among the straw—the most suitable place for a sinner like me I had ever found—and my heart was stormed with irrepressible emotions; but I could not pray. One after another prayed for me, and still I remained prayerless. I felt a desire to be hid away from human sight. I was afraid that the people of God would become tired of praying for me. But I remained in a kneeling position until the dusk of the evening, when I concluded I would separate myself from the praying people, and go home. While preparing to start, I found that some one through mistake had taken my hat, and left another of inferior quality in its place. This a little tried me for a few moments, when a lame old gentleman came limping along, much excited, with my hat, which he exchanged for his own; and I was thankful. I then started for home, avoiding as much as possible being seen, as I had been at the mourners' bench,—sin yet making me ashamed of endeavouring to do what in the sight of God was right and acceptable to him. Why are sinners not ashamed to sin?

When home, I waited till all my family were fast asleep, and then I endeavoured to pray. I arose quickly from my knee—for but one touched the floor—thinking that some one might be watching me through the windows. Securing

them against this danger, I took off my boots to avoid any noise in the exercise I was about to engage in. I then took off my coat, and blew out the light, to be fully prepared for the great work I felt it my duty to perform. I finally went to bed without praying, thinking that I could as well pray in bed, when I immediately fell asleep.

Early on Thursday morning I was again on my way to the camp-ground. Arriving there ere the sparkling dew had retired before the advancing steps of day, I was soon again kneeling in the tent for the prayers of the people of God. The voice of one praying for me arrested my attention. It was the voice of one with whom I had long been acquainted—with whom I had associated in sin and folly. He had but a year previously made a profession of religion. His sincerity struck me forcibly. Who can know what sincerity is, but those who realize its nature within them? I rose up, and requested him to follow me a little way off into the woods. When we were together alone, in a place of deep shade, I said to him, "Aaron, tell me as plainly as you can how you obtained religion." He replied, "I am very weak, and will go and bring some one here to you who knows more than I do." "No," said I, "Aaron, I want one to teach me,

who knows no better than to tell me what he knows about salvation." "Well then," said he, "go into the tent, and tell your whole heart to the brethren, that they may know how to pray for you." After Aaron had prayed for me in our lonely retreat, we both went back to the tent; and I, after kneeling awhile, arose to comply with his instructions. It was a great trial; as I thought the confidence of the brethren would be shaken in me, as my hardness of heart and stubbornness of will should be unfolded to them. I was of opinion that all true seekers of religion have pure and good thoughts, and I had bad ones; and honesty compelled me to confess this truth to them. After making a disclosure of my state of mind to them, I expected to hear them say: "Now you had better take your hat and go home, for you are not a true penitent!" But after I had told them all my heart on the subject, they with great tenderness encouraged me more than ever. My mind thus unburdened, I felt an increase of energy to persevere. After kneeling down again I was tempted much. An aged female prayed for me, which was so mortifying to me—to have a woman publicly pray for me—that I for a while contemplated going with my family away from the neighbourhood, to avoid the disgrace.

I continued most of the day on my knees seeking the "pearl of great price;" but to the faith that saves I was yet a stranger "shut up."

In the evening of that day the lamented Rev. G. G. Cookman preached, and I remained to hear him. That evening—as many may yet remember—the devil gathered his forces, who attacked the encampment armed with stones. But the boldness and mighty spirit of Mr. Cookman, while preaching from these words, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," inspired me with fresh courage to persevere; while the wicked ceased their uproar, and were intimidated in prosecuting their unholy purposes by the holy awe heard in the thunder of his voice, as it fell on the thousands gathered in the woods that night.

While on my way home, in company with a local preacher, I had good advice given me about the need of praying myself, before I could expect to enjoy religion. I was told that I must be willing to confess Christ before men, before I could be his disciple.

On the morning of the 28th of June, the last day of the meeting, I rose up early, the most disheartened and sin-burdened creature, it appeared to me, of all I had ever known. To an inquiry made to me by my wife, "How I liked camp-meeting?" I replied: "I wish to hear no

more about camp-meetings, nor the Methodists; they have caused me more trouble than everything else on earth besides." The temptation under which I laboured was grievous. I looked into the Bible; but it seemed to me a strange book, more suitable to others than to me. Dark thoughts of suicide were lurking in the secret depths of my heart! I felt that my life would be short if salvation did not come to my relief soon.

After a few moments of sober, solemn reflection, I regretted what I had said about the Methodists and camp-meetings, and resolved anew to persevere in seeking the salvation of my soul. To this end, and in view of this object, I declared openly that I would never eat nor drink anything more until the question then pending between God and my soul was settled. If salvation was for me, I intended, if possible, to know it soon; if not, I desired even to know this also. Again I set off for the camp-ground, in company with the powerful brother that had pulled me into the tent. He was the kind of company I needed; and I had listened at the keyhole of a door once, and heard him pray for me, which made me love him the more.

During that day I heard preaching with an attentive ear. With strugglings of soul I prayed for myself, as I was bowed at the altar; and the

prayers of the people of God for me were fervent. My resolution to go without food and drink, until I should obtain the bread and drink which is unto eternal life, remained firm. The conflict with the enemy was desperate until about four o'clock in the afternoon, when Satan seemed almost more than a match for a while. I was yielding to horrid despair, and retired a short distance from the encampment, to a solitary place, where a decayed log afforded me a seat—sad emblem of my withering hopes! I was emaciated, and weary of labour and of life. I anticipated being soon among the ruined and the lost. I thought I had done all that I possibly could, without success. I had a sharp knife in my vest-pocket. Its piercing point had already been in my thoughts, in premeditation; and now the hour had come when I expected it would penetrate my heart! It was taken out for this object, and examined; and the locality of the beating heart tested by my right hand, after the vest had been thrown open for the purpose. A stone lay there before me, of hollow surface, which was about being stained with the suicide's blood! While in terrible suspense, an intelligible voice, not of audible sound, seemed to say, "Why will you slay yourself? Your anguish is of a spiritual kind—it is not agony of body—it is sin in the soul; and disuniting soul

and body will give no relief, while it will place both forever beyond redeeming power." This new intelligence was from God, who delighteth in mercy; and this mercy was timely and availing, and I profited by it.

With fresh hope I made my way to the "preachers' stand," where there was a prayer-meeting. I requested a brother, whose voice had to me feeling in it, (now the Rev. Wesley Robertson, of the New-Jersey Conference,) to pray for me. While he was engaged in praying I adopted his words as my own. I realized as he prayed for me the thoughts of my heart expressed in his prayer. Borne along thus to the throne of grace, I apprehended the Lord Jesus Christ bearing in himself my sins. Instantly I felt entirely unburdened! All trouble was gone. I had peace such as I never before had enjoyed. My spirit was free; and I wondered, and was glad, and thankful that I had not shed my own blood!

Temptations soon came; but by faith they were overcome. Yielding up all to Christ, there was in a few minutes poured out upon me a baptism of the Holy Ghost, fresh from the third heaven! I praised God aloud. I said, "Blessed Jesus! Glory to Jesus!" with feelings I could not repress. The world seemed all new and shining from the "Spirit's garnishing."

# CHAPTER VI.

## GROWTH IN CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

If we stand clear, in a justified state, and are pressing on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, we shall soon be brought into deep conviction of mind, for holiness of heart and life.—DR. LEVINGS.

I HAD not been long in the school of Christ before I learned from his teaching, that true religious experience is a continued progress, sustained and carried on by the joint concurrence of both God and man—God in Christ, by his Spirit, in connexion with man through Jesus, by faith. This advance is not merely in a multiplication of duties and responsibilities, but in an increase of knowledge, in enlargement and refinement of soul—a growth in usefulness for the present life, and in fitness for the next. Without such progress, in some degree, I feared I could not avoid lukewarmness nor apostasy. And what real Christian feels prepared to be "at ease in Zion?"

At the time of my conversion—as before alluded to—while the Rev. Wesley Robertson was praying, particularly for me, I used his words in my mind as my own, in my approaches unto God, thus, as it were, climbing up to the throne

of grace by them, through the Mediator, Jesus Christ, whom evidently they set before me. I had then a spiritual vision. There seemed to be before me an exceeding high mountain, the summit of which was lost in the distance. It was crowned with a bright cloud that shed an amber light around the eternal hill; and midway there shone, in heavenly radiance, one of the loveliest of all faces ever seen!—like unto that of the Son of man. This benignant countenance seemed smiling upon me while I prayed, with no earthly smile. A voice from its lips came to my soul, saying, "Look on me!" Instantly I thought on the once dying but now risen Saviour, who is alive forever more! I thought of the glory of God the Father, shining in the face of Jesus Christ. I believed, and was changed in heart suddenly. I now saw men as trees walking, but did not know what to make of this strange absence of all guilt and care. It was to me entirely new, and I did not know it was religion. The witness of the Spirit I shortly after received. I had just been tempted with the thought, "that Christ might, at last, himself be overthrown!" when a shudder, and an agony of prayer, were succeeded by the following passages of Scripture coming to my mind: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;"

"For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." I knew not whether I had read the above passages in seven years. They were now brought to my aid at a time of need, and were "profitable" to me.

Unitarianism is very near of kin to deism. With me it received its quietus in the first witness I received of pardon in Jesus Christ. It is a form of error natural to unregenerate man, but which the changed heart, while adhering to the principles of its new life, will resist. I praised the name of Jesus with feelings inspired by it, and *not natural to me;* and the more I praised him the more intense my desire became to do so. And I have never in the least—and I have not neglected self-examination—felt any guilt or heaviness come over my spirits because of my sincere desire and efforts to glorify Christ as God—as the "true God," and "eternal life." Does God allow sincere idolaters to possess the same purity of motive, spirituality of mind, and power with him in prayer, that he does give to his children? Does he look upon truth and error with an "equal eye?" Would the Holy Ghost witness in the heart to the faith which recognises as God over all, the Lord Jesus Christ, were he not supreme? Let such questions find

an answer in this: "He that believeth on the Son, hath the witness in himself."

When I first rose up to praise God, who had "begotten me again unto a lively hope," it appeared to me that myriads of happy spirits were thronging the consecrated enclosure. The spirituality of religion had not only changed my heart, but given a glow of beauty to the external appearance of things. The sun, which before gave a feverish and sickly light, now beamed with a brighter effulgence. The summer, green everywhere around, had charms new and delightful; and the thousands of leaves of the forest were nature's tongues, eloquent with praises to God. "A sea of glory" rolled its waves over me, and I could not calm the *turbulence* of my joy. I kept on shouting "Glory to God!" with but little power to roll back the tide that swelled and flowed in upon me. So I continued until nearly sunset. I then walked out slowly, with my eyes partly closed, in order, as much as possible, to allay the excitement of overwhelming rapture under which I laboured. A preacher—I think the late Rev. J. Buckley—exhorting from the stand at the time, in a very happy frame of mind, imparted such a feeling to the two following lines, especially in my case, as he repeated them—

"O what hath Jesus bought for me!
Before my ravish'd eyes"—

that I hardly knew whether I was in the body or out of it. I again burst forth in praises so loud and frequent that I certainly would have sunk down with exhaustion, had not God strengthened me to bear it. I, therefore, from a sense of prudence, being unable to suppress *my* noise, walked home, between two brethren, resting upon their arms, praising God along the way.

When near home I lost my testimony. Like the pilgrim in Bunyan's dream, I felt in my bosom for my roll, and found it not, and I was alarmed. My good friends had advised me to tell my wife what the Lord had done for me, and now I had lost the witness, and what could I tell her? I was again sad, and leaned against a fence, like a weeping child. I tried, by ardent prayer, to raise my heart to the point of faith, but my efforts were vain. At length, after sobbing awhile over my trouble, I resolved to serve God from principle, without happy feelings, if he chose, for my good, not to inspire me with them; or to suffer the devil for a season, if need be, to buffet me. So I journeyed on my way homeward, determined to do the best I could in the service of God, under all circumstances, and at all times.

Immediately on entering the door of my residence, I said to my wife, in compliance with instructions received, "Mary, I have got what I went for." The words were scarcely uttered before I was assailed with the temptation that I had said a very foolish thing. My wife inquired, "Well, what have you got?" This was to me a most trying moment, as the "witness" I had lost had not yet returned; and the predicament I was in made the perspiration break out profusely upon me, through mortification. I, with rallied resolution, at length declared aloud, "I know that the Lord did convert my soul at the camp-meeting, and that I was not deceived." Instantly the charm of Satan was broken, faith revived, and the spirit of liberty was enjoyed to as great a degree as on the camp-ground. Confession and faith go together. They cannot well be separated from the heart that would retain and enjoy experimental Christianity; they must both be exercised at once when circumstances call for it.

I walked round the room praising God. Everything seemed to be new—furniture, wife, children, and all. Then I spoke tender, loving words to my wife, telling her not to be discouraged, for I believed that my conversion was all for the best. "Well," said she, "I am glad

of it." Some neighbours, hearing "the news" of my conduct at the camp-meeting, had stepped in to see the "dead alive, and the lost found," and gravely opined that I had been drinking beer. A Methodist—the one who had pulled me into the tent—had accompanied me home, and had been a witness to my conversion, said, "No, my friends, I can assure you, he has been drinking nothing but the wine of the kingdom."

After conversation, singing, and experience-telling, in compliance with "Mary's" wish, I sat down and ate supper, the first food or drink I put into my mouth in twenty-four hours. The time for retiring approached, and I took down the Bible to read, and said, "Now I am going to commence family worship, and I expect to continue it while I live." In this my wife readily joined me, and I kneeled down and prayed to God for his mercy to rest upon us, thanking him for what I had experienced that day, and that my family and all my relations might in sincerity and truth serve the Most High. Sweet, indeed, was my sleep on that first night after my soul's espousals to God. In the night I awoke, and induced my wife to kneel down, and I prayed for her soul's conversion.

The morning of the 29th came, and I awoke from a most refreshing sleep. Soon the sugges-

tion was started in my mind that the devil, during the night, might have stolen out of my heart the "good seed." This temptation was soon overcome by faith.

It had been given out that a love-feast would be held on the camp-ground, on Saturday morning, and I made all necessary preparations to be there. On my way thither the grass, the flowers, the cattle, and the birds, all seemed to be full of praise. When I arrived at the camp-ground I looked around to see what kind of a feast a love-feast could be, for I knew but very little of Methodism. After the bread and water had passed round, I soon partook of the *dainties* of the feast, until my *heart* was filled to overflowing, and my "mouth with arguments."

Many at the love-feast, in relating their experience, had occasion to allude to the means and manner of their becoming Methodists. This started my thoughts on the subject of my duty to join some branch of the Church of Christ. This duty I had not previously considered, my whole desire having been absorbed in the seeking of the salvation of my soul. From what I heard at the love-feast, and the need I felt of spiritual helps and instruction, I resolved to connect myself, if I could, with some branch of the Christian Church. My natural inclination, I am disposed

to think, would have led me to stand alone; but I had already too long walked by the rule of nature. It was time that grace should now prevail. But which branch ought I to unite with? occupied my mind on my way home. The several advantages which the various Churches in the city would afford me were taken into consideration. The Methodist Church had frequent prayer-meetings, class-meetings, love-feasts, preaching with power, without notes, and free-seats. For a while my mind hung in suspense, when I considered that in these respects other Churches differed from the Methodist. I rather inclined to go where there would be for me more "ease," more respectability, and less persecution. But I made the question, which Church I should unite with? a subject of prayer to God. The conviction that God had made Methodism the means of my conversion, was a strong argument dissuading me against leaving Methodism. But I had been told, "that the government of the Methodist Episcopal Church was tyrannical—that the bishops were ambitious of power, lording it over God's heritage." Tyranny I hated, and always meant to hate; but whether the Methodist bishops were tyrannical or not, was another consideration. I had found out that some other grave charges against the Methodists, entertained

by some people who knew as much about them as an infidel does of purity of heart, were without foundation in truth; and whether this charge, also, of tyranny and ambition, might not be false, was a subject to be duly considered, before the verdict should be rendered. I procured a "Discipline," and read it that afternoon, and found it contained many things not at all in accordance with reports about it, made by its enemies. I became convinced that whatever might be right for others to do, it was right for me to join the Methodist Episcopal Church, and that soon.

I repaired immediately to the residence of the Rev. L. Higgins, then colleague of the Rev. G. G. Cookman, in the Newark charge, and found both those gentlemen at the parsonage. After relating to them my conversion, I expressed my desire and intention of *then* and *there* uniting with the Church. I was told that on Sabbath morning an opportunity would be given me. But I persisted in my purpose, saying, that "To-morrow morning is not mine, and *now* I feel it my duty to join the Church." My name was accordingly placed on the Church record, and I have had but one regret in this connexion, that I have not lived more fully up to all the privileges afforded me, in this form of Christ's kingdom on earth, so manifestly blessed with God's reviving

power in its midst. This Church, I believe, contains all the essential elements of ultimate universal prevalency and triumph of the gospel on earth. The Methodist Church is called upon to be a "bright and shining light"—a lamp that burneth amid other Churches—leading them on in the way of experience and holiness, to final conquest and glory. And if our Church shall refuse to do this, God will raise up another people, ere long, that *will* be foremost in the march of the armies militant.

On Sunday morning, as I was on my way to the house of God, it appeared as though I had never seen a Sabbath before. In every direction multitudes were wending their way to the different places of public worship, and I thought of the Lord of the Sabbath, who had set apart the seventh portion of time for purposes purely devotional, and hallowed it. Entering the "gates of Zion," for the first time with my eyes opened, my heart desired to dwell "where God had commanded his blessings forever more." The preaching of the word was to my soul "life and spirit."

In the afternoon of the same day, I heard Mr. Cookman. He was in the Spirit, and the power of God overpowered my physical strength, and I sank down in a swoon under it. The first intimation I had of this state was the sudden

dropping down of my hand from the top of the back of the pew, where I had placed it, and this being accompanied with the absence of all sensation in the limb. I could not raise it; and my vision and hearing became quite indistinct. My mind, all the while, was in a state like unto a delicious dream. On the return of my bodily strength I began to have a faint view of Mr. Cookman, and his voice became gradually more distinct and audible, as though he were approaching nearer and nearer, from a distance, until I heard him say to the congregation, "The Lord works in his own way." Seeing the people in the gallery looking down intently upon me, I arose and said, "This is no delusion, this is no delusion;" and sat down in sweet peace of mind.

On Monday evening succeeding the Sabbath just alluded to, I met in a general prayer-meeting, Mr. Cookman being in the altar leading. After singing, Mr. Cookman, on kneeling down, said, "Brother S——, you will please pray with us." I was frightened. Many of my old acquaintances were present, and how could I pray before them? My prayer was one of the most crooked and clumsy ever framed; after which an aged member of the Church commenced praying thus, "O Lord, teach him how to pray." Sometime afterward, I ascertained that my crooked

prayer had no bad effect upon my friends, they being convinced it was not dictated with a desire to make a display.

Under the warm and delightful impressions of first love, it appeared that I could almost talk religion into the unconverted. With a heart full to overflowing, I went to talk with my mother. I said, "O mother, I am converted and happy. I wish you had religion, mother." She replied, "Now, see what you have got by going with the Methodists! Did I not tell you to keep away from them?" I left her, resolved to pray for her. Shortly after she sent for me, feeling deep conviction on account of sin, which increased until she was converted; and then she was a Methodist too.

At an early date in my religious life, I was brought to see the importance of performing acts not pleasing to flesh and blood. I had, at some period previous to my conversion, used abusive language to a physician,—a gentleman also of warm temperament,—and I felt it my duty to go and make my apology to him for my conduct. The doctor, with tears, expressed perfect satisfaction, and has ever since evinced toward me confidence and kindness.

Another person, of high passions, who had been ridiculed in print by me, suspected me, and

had expressed vengeance. I felt anxious to have the matter settled. One day, walking leisurely along beneath the "aged elms," I was just about meeting the irritable man, where no one at the time was near us. A startled feeling of disagreeable surprise passed over my nerves as we drew near, and I perceived rage in his countenance. I said, "Friend F——, a word to you, if you please." He did not answer, nor heed me. I continued: "Sir, I know I have injured you, and want to make amends, as God has shown mercy to me." He turned his head and wiped away a tear, saying he could not remain angry with a man of such a spirit.

Some of my religious friends, fearing that I would be "righteous overmuch," enticed me away to where there was a political meeting, held in a large room of a tavern, that I might there "render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's." The meeting was composed of "all sorts and sizes," and my mind was absorbed with the things of religion. Something being said about the banner, by the orator on the occasion, I thought so *loudly* on the "Banner of the Cross," that I praised God! Finding I had no business there, I soon left the scene of political fooleries, thinking, with regret, on the fact that young converts are often led away from their steadfastness

by the influence of political jugglery, played off upon them by demagogues and office-seekers; and they grow lukewarm and cold, and are found, in a short time, like stranded wrecks along the coast of life's probationary sea.

In my justified state I was more happy than I had anticipated while a seeker, for I then had conjectured that I had laughed for the last time. I had, as yet, read no doctrinal works on vital piety, nor Christian biography. The Bible, for a few weeks after my conversion, was nearly all I read. Wesley and his coädjutors, in their labours and writings, with some slight exceptions, were to me unknown. I learned from the Book of God, and my own heart, more concerning natural depravity, than while I was altogether under its sway. Of the original languages in which the Scriptures were written, I was ignorant; and this grieved me, for if I had paid that attention to learning which I might have done, some knowledge of Greek and Hebrew might have been attained. The Spirit, however, had "taken of the things of Christ" and shown them unto me. Through atoning blood I had been redeemed, and the precious promises had led me to partake of the divine nature. In honest search after truth, I became convinced that the religion of the Bible reached further still than the forgive-

ness of sins. I saw signs in *my* nature that it lacked that holiness others had enjoyed. The first sign I discovered of this lack was, to laugh at an old black man, who, for his want of sense, and his love of rum, was made the butt of ridicule for wicked boys. For nearly a whole day I was in anxiety of mind for laughing at "poor old Joe;" and yet, when he turned on the boys such a characteristic look over his shoulder, and said, "You tink I'm *a fool!* Yes, and I know odders dat tink so too"—it was almost enough to make Job, in his affliction, laugh. For him, too, Christ had died; and I was in distress because the carnal mind in me was not destroyed. I lacked the "faith of assurance," which is always connected with an inward work, constantly carried on by the Holy Spirit; and, although advised by some professors not to trouble myself about such things, I loved my conviction more than their unsafe counsel. My heart, to me, seemed worse than my outward conduct would manifest. I found the law had no saving efficacy upon me, whenever I strove to obey it in a *saving way*. It pointed out defects which nothing could remedy but faith in Christ. Conscience was not made pure, nor kept in a pure state, by endeavours to obey the law; and continual forgiveness, by faith, did not reach far enough to

answer the need felt of salvation. This need of holiness of heart, this state of grace promised, was before my mind. My chief hinderances to this blessing I ascertained to be inward corruption, temptation, and the apparent unconcern on the subject of some of the best unsanctified Christians. Against these hinderances I arrayed my desire for holiness, the promises of God to cleanse, and the effects of compliance or refusal on my heart and life—consequences endless and awful.

One pleasant evening, after the sun was set, I retired from all noise and bustle to a solitary place, with the view of seeking from God what I felt the need of. Over an unsanctified heart during the day I had mourned, and to be alone with God was befitting me. I prayed thus, in substance: "O God! I am in nakedness of soul before thee. Thy piercing, scrutinizing eye is upon me. Thy wrath but a little while ago rested on my guilty soul, as I looked out upon the 'blackness of darkness' before me. I called on thy blessed name in prayer, for the sake of thy Son Jesus Christ, to have mercy on me. I believed, and mercy came. Now I come again, through the Crucified, feeling the need of a pure heart. I desire an abiding principle of holiness within me. I feel assured thou wilt not send me away empty." I remained on my knees about

half an hour, after making a vow not to rise until I had received the witness that God had answered my petition. Assurance was imparted to me in a way I did not expect. When first converted, I was overwhelmed by a torrent; now, I was so surrounded and pervaded by the presence of God, that there was, indeed, "a great calm." My soul was filled with wondrous, heavenly love. I rose up, and went home in a delightful frame. I opened the Bible; but O, the rivers of living water that seemed to gush forth from the promises of life, to the rich supply of all my spiritual wants!

But a short time had elapsed after this refreshing season from the presence of the Lord, when in a general class-meeting, speaking of the work of grace I had experienced, I said that "Christ, of God, was made unto me sanctification, as well as righteousness, wisdom, and redemption;" and that "I had received the faith of assurance, and could *not* backslide, being kept by the power of God, and should be kept." The next day, meeting with an intelligent and pious member of the Church, who had been present at the general class-meeting, he told me that my language had not conveyed to him definitely the true state I seemed to enjoy. "You were," said he, "a little unguarded in your expressions. You

cannot, my brother, have faith now that will keep you to-morrow; for faith is a present exercise, and the future is not yet. And although God is unchangeable in his goodness, our present believing does not make us infallible, nor assure us of our steadfastness in the future." I acknowledged his correction to be just and proper, and thanked him for it, praising God for class-meetings, made by him the means of such wholesome instruction. How much of the advance in religious experience, enjoyed by the Methodists, is attributable to class-meetings.

I still clung to the faith of assurance, by which I endeavoured every moment to apprehend the Saviour keeping me from both guilt and corruption, in Spirit and in truth. By justification I was free from guilt; by sanctification I was free from corruption; and by faith, at the same time, from the same source, I realized these "parts to be of one stupendous whole."

By one Spirit, of one Lord, through one faith, the witness was received—of sanctification and justification—and yet these blessings were distinctly discriminated, the one from the other, as colours inherent in one ray of light by a prism are seen to be distinct, the one colour from all the rest. This witness I found to be nothing less than the Holy Spirit dwelling in me, in light, truth, purity,

and love. The name of it I did not know; for I had not formed in my mind any theory of it. The witness of it, by the Spirit, I regarded as of much more importance than the technical terms so often employed to set it forth.

This state did not place me beyond the reach of temptation, but rather increased the activity of Satanic influence upon me; and yet gave me discernment and power to detect and resist the adversary. I soon was led to set apart one day in the week for fasting; although I well knew that "by the deeds of the law" I could not preserve my soul in life, nor could I expect to keep the law perfectly while on earth; for the view I took of the case was, that I was a sinner passing through the saving process, carried on by the ever-glorious Trinity; and, therefore, submitting to this process, my faith was counted to me for righteousness, that I might be blessed with faithful Abraham. I read the writings of Wesley and Fletcher on the subject, and "Watson's Institutes." They all strengthened me in the faith, and illustrated the utility and importance of fasting. Self-denial, for Christ's sake, cannot generally be practised in a more successful way than by fasting. In this duty, spiritual gifts and graces are called into exercise in no ordinary manner, and gain an ascendency over the attri-

butes of the carnal mind to a degree not known by those who neglect its performance. Fasting, though of such importance, must not be carried too far. The time of abstinence from food, and the frequency of it, should be regulated by individual constitutions, and other circumstances. I have found fasting to be beneficial; and believe there would be more of it among us were our bodies to be kept more under, to give freedom and energy to the Spirit. This was illustrated in a meeting once held preparatory to the commencement of a protracted effort. The brethren in favour of a protracted meeting were requested to fast the ensuing day, and manifest their willingness by rising up to be counted. All rose up but one good brother.

The time between justification and sanctification has occupied some of my attention and serious thought. I cannot see any need of a space of time intervening between the experience of one and the other. They are both alike necessary to the well-being of the soul; and the principal cause of pardon being enjoyed so often before purity is witnessed in the heart, is the instruction received to so look for them to come. There may be something in the fact, that moral pollution is not clearly seen until the pardon of guilt makes way for the light; yet they both are obtained and

retained by faith in present exercise. Wesley held to the possibility of the simultaneous witness of both justification and sanctification; and I have known persons to testify to the fact in their own cases, and their lives evinced the best proof of the truth of their testimony. Certainly the promises of God do not favour the presumption that a space of time must intervene between the parts of a full preparation for usefulness and heaven; and no portion of the word of God assures us, that at a future time, if we wait, we shall "be made whole."

The profession of sanctification is an important duty; and to know how and when to make the profession is of great service to the believer. Not to profess it at all, is to avoid the enjoyment of it. "Light maketh manifest." "Ye are my witnesses," says Jesus; and though difficult, this kind of cross-bearing, still it must be done. God's work in believers always shines out, with "true light," in profession; but then there are false lights, that profess what they do not possess, and such will claim the true ones as belonging to them; and then cold and unsanctified Christians will oppose us as differing from themselves. So we will have to bear the reproach of the cross for Jesus's sake. And it is mortifying to stand where we are liable to all the charges of hypocrisy

and enthusiasm, from the gainsaying, in the profession we are called to make of the truth in us. I have found it necessary for me to hold such profession, in order to use fulness and fitness for heaven. This is the most delicate part of my duty to God: it must be performed, or his Spirit will be grieved.

The fruits of the Spirit will show themselves when sanctifying grace abides in the heart,—are a sure though secondary evidence of the possession of this grace. The first fruit—or among the first—that appeared in my heart, after its renewal, was an abhorrence of sin, a loathing of self, and a love of holiness, in communion with Christ. Another was, a strong desire to be found at all times in faithful obedience to God, as far as his will concerning me could be ascertained. One more was, a happy conformity of mind to the gracious truths contained in Christ's Sermon on the Mount—forgiving injuries done me, loving enemies, and doing good to them who might despitefully use me. The tempers and dispositions, conformable to such truths, are of the sanctified. How magnanimous do such qualities appear, when contrasted with the tempers of those who are of this world! They distinguish that kingdom of Jesus, which is not of this world, from every other kingdom. With such

qualities, seeing him who is invisible, the followers of Jesus envy not the glittering magnificence of surrounding worldly greatness. They seek, with assurance, a country brighter and more beautiful than the gardens of the present world, when robed in their richest attire.

In my going on unto perfection, I received, in the beginning, much help from Mr. Cookman, in his preaching, and from his personal attentions to me. His faith was more than ordinary, and on some occasions it appeared almost miraculous. He took great pains to instruct me in the "more excellent way." The Rev. John Hersey, by his sweet spirit manifested on all occasions, was a help to me. His preaching, before sunrise, in the city of Newark, was to me the means of great good. In plainness of dress he might have gone too far, yet it was done for the sake of his Master. His sermon, on the last morning of his visit, made an indelible impression on my mind. It was in the Methodist Episcopal Church in Halsey-street. The coming judgment was the theme; and as the sun was just rising, he stretched out his arms far over the pulpit, and declared with great feeling, "that he longed for the coming of the resurrection morn." Then, amid much weeping, I too felt weaned from the love of the present world. The Rev. E. S. Janes, now one of

the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, gave me a clear view of the Spirit's sanctifying work. In a conversation on my experience of religion, he explained in such a plain and simple manner the blessing of a clean heart, that impressions were then made upon my mind that have never left me. And reading, too, has been a help to me. I cannot believe, with some good men, that books written on the subject have been an injury; although controversy, in warmth, has not, in general, had a sanctifying tendency. I read, with profit, Mahan, and Finney, "The Guide to Holiness," with its "cloud of witnesses," and Rev. Dr. George Peck's book, in an abridged form. From the perusal of this book I was enabled to see, with some distinctness, the difference between a supposed perfection of *our* work *for* God, and of *his* work *in us*. It shows that the perfection of a remedy for sin in its application, operation, and experience, is more suitable for sinners than a supposed perfection of requirement. The book does not abound in exciting matter, but it shows the solid truths and facts which must be the guide of all who, ultimately, may gain an entrance through the gates of pearl into the holy city.

In the remembrance of my young experience in the things of grace, I find a pleasure not felt

in the retrospections of past unbelief. I had long been sitting down in the cold shadow of the deep valley of death, that shadow, day by day, growing more deep and gloomy around me. The Day-spring from on high visited me, and my wife became a partaker of the same joy. We delighted in all the means of grace, and were seldom absent from class-meeting, prayer-meeting, or the Sabbath services of the sanctuary. Delightful days, still in pleasing remembrance! Though poor, we had bread to eat that the world knew not of. Without a richly furnished parlour, and splendid hall to our dwelling, we were happy in our narrow apartment, for we had an inheritance undefiled, in the mansions of day. In cheap attire we were comfortable, for we had the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. In our humble situation we were contented, and would not have exchanged it for any other, the most wealthy in the world. We had Christ, and with him "all things." He it was that gave value to our food, clothing, shelter, friends—to our seeing, hearing, tasting—to our breathing, heart-beating, and healthful exercises of the body and soul. He impressed the value also on our sleeping, waking, thinking, and feeling. To the moments forming the stream of "life-time," bearing us onward to eternity's ocean, he gave

value and currency, encouragement, and hope of future good.

I believed in Jesus as fully as though I had myself seen him rise from the dead. My care was cast upon him, and I was confident all things were under his control—that he would manage all things for my good, while I thus believed in him. What though some might despise me for being poor? the time would come, I was assured, when riches and poverty would be levelled together into eternal equality. O pleasant days of young experience! I would not have them blotted from memory. Their cloudy scenes of temptation and trial are brighter to me than the glow of sunshine that gilds the pleasures of worldly greatness. The long streets, in cloudy weather, dreary and dark, through "cold November rains," I deemed delightful, as they led me to the house of prayer. These I would prefer, elbowing my way along to God's holy temple, through the multitudes of the thoughtless and the gay, to the flowery walks and glittering avenues through which pride, blindfolded, is pressing its way to its final fall. Let all my sufferings be in the present, while my spirit is yet enshrined in its mould of clay, that there shall be none remaining to mar the future rest I expect to enjoy with the people of God, when the scenes of mortality with me shall

be closed, and death, the resurrection, and the final judgment are passed, and in the immortal memory to be reflected on by man forever and ever. "There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God;" and to the certain attainment of that rest with the sanctified, blood-washed, and shining millions, let everything connected with my earthly existence tend, while travelling through the vale of tears.

# CHAPTER VII.

## VISITS TO TAMMANY HALL.

No dear love to foster, no kind friend to wrong,
Wild as the mountain flood they drive along,
And sweep, remorseless, every social bloom
To the dark level of an endless tomb.—CLIFTON.

THE truth contained in the axiom, "Diamond cuts diamond," illustrates the peculiar adaptation of each individual Christian to the work to which he is called. This work cannot be performed by any except those appointed to it; and hence angels are not intrusted with the gospel of salvation to bear it as a message from God to sinners. Angels are not adapted to this work. Sinners need, in the messengers from God to them with "good tidings," "men of like passions" with themselves. This need is met in the provision God has made. And hence, also, the vast variety of talents and gifts in the gospel ministry, suitable to every class of hearers. Not so great variety, probably, is found among any class of professional men, as among the gospel ministry, because not needed. As "diamond cuts diamond," so the heart of the drunkard, by *cutting*

impressions made upon it by the reformed inebriate, is reached when other means would fail. On the same principle, a backslider is more likely to be moved to penitence by the instrumentality of a reclaimed backslider. This is a universal law among mankind, and holds good in all cases. Infidels are therefore more likely to be penetrated with saving truth through the instrumentality of converted infidels, than through other agencies. I have myself enjoyed a more intimate and reciprocal heart-correspondence with converted infidels than with any other class of Christians, notwithstanding my love toward, and union with, all God's people. Such, to some degree, were my emotions when I made preparations to visit my old friends, the deists, at "Tammany Hall."

I had not long escaped from the black piratical vessel of infidelity, whose horrid ensign at masthead bears the grinning death's head and cross-bones, and gone on board of the "old ship Zion," before I felt much anxiety for the fate of the crew I had left. The devil is their captain, and he will, if they escape not from under his flag, finally make them all walk the plank of unbelief, until they plunge from the end of it into the gulf of perdition! To what an awful whirlpool are infidels madly driving!—a vortex a thousand times more fearful than the far-known maelstrom

on the Norwegian coast! Round the dizzy circle to the centre's deep abyss,—

> "Onward they drive in dreadful race,
> Pursuers and pursued."

While I, in thankfulness to God, rejoiced that I had left their darkness and danger, and had come to where the "true light" shined, and perfect security from evil was guaranteed; and where an opportunity was afforded for observation, with suitable instruments, so necessary for sea-faring men in order to a knowledge of position and direction, I still yearned with a desire for their welfare. I knew that many of them, in their secular dealings, were even more correct than some professors of religion. This I feared they leaned upon, and would be to them a broken reed that would pierce their hand. Their measuring their outward form of morality with that faulty part of character of those Christian professors in whom they placed no confidence, as genuine Christians, was to them a blinding operation, and a stumbling-block; for it is the policy of the devil to pick out the worst professors, and hold them up as a standard of Christian excellence. In waging war against the Lord Jesus Christ and his Church, he often leads bad men into this Church in order to make fools of as many as he

can, by prevailing on them to make an estimate of religion by this false rule, that he may lay the blame on our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus bad representatives of the religion of the Bible do more harm, infinitely, than all the efforts combined, put forth by all classes of infidels. What could infidels say or do, to any seeming amount, in their opposition to the truth, were every professor on earth a true follower, in all things possible, of our Lord Jesus Christ? Feeling the force of this fact, I wished to hold up to their view, if possible, my own renewed heart, that they might have some proof of Christ's work and power to save. I had but little confidence of their being much benefited by mere historical evidence. The "Evidences" of Archdeacon Paley, and the Apology for the Bible by the Bishop of Llandaff, and "Leslie's Method with the Deists," are profitable for Christians to read; but they are weak in the conversion of infidels. These works are mere moonshine, glittering upon the ice-castles of the infidel's intellect. They seldom elicit fire enough to thaw the ice that incrusts the cold heart of unbelief. The fountain of infidelity is in the heart—depraved and festering. This central part of man's existence must be first struck by the stroke of divine truth before it "moves aright." The infidel, like other sinners,

needs a sin-killing shock of spiritual power, from the Source of being, to pass through him. He needs to touch, by faith, the conductors that draw down upon man the force of saving truth from the divinely-erected battery on high. The old fortifications of his heart must be dismantled by the enginery of the word, and the strong man armed must be overcome by a stronger than he. Anatomical investigations and explanations will not effect a cure for a diseased man. So also it is in a spiritual sense. Experience, related in the demonstration of the Spirit, will do more than all the ethical argumentation in the world. I recollected how such a course had affected me; on one occasion, especially, when I had felt the conviction of the truth in this way, not easily to be forgotten. I went once to a simple-hearted Methodist for the express purpose of inducing him, by argument, to give up his faith in Christ's religion, telling him that he was certainly the dupe of cunning priestcraft; that it would do him as much good to believe what the newspapers contained, as what the Bible did. In this I acknowledge myself to have been deceived, and on that ground made efforts to deceive others. But my Methodist friend, though not talented nor learned, having the truth of saving grace in his heart, was more than a match for

my infidel sophistry. He said in reply: "John, I know better; I have got the witness *here!*" placing his hand upon his heart. And this reply of his was accompanied with such a look, that it left an impression on my mind more to the purpose than all the cold evidences I have ever read in the theories and speculations on the subject by unconverted learned authors.

I was informed that the principal deists of New-York city assembled every Sabbath morning in Tammany Hall, as an "Association of Philanthropists," to discuss questions on "True and Fabulous Theology." I was acquainted with many of them, who were in the habit of coming over to Newark to hold meetings with us in former days. I had never met with them in Tammany Hall; and now, being converted to the religion of Christ, I had a strong desire to tell them of it at their own place of meeting.

The first time I entered the Hall of "Old Tammany" was on a bright Sabbath morning, when all nature seemed full of life and loveliness, contrasting strongly with the darkness and death in the minds of the infidel throng that was gathering at the place. I felt a strange sensation, fearful it might not be right and proper to spend God's holy day in such a manner. However, I yielded to inclination, and ascended the stairs

leading into the Hall. I gave my "three cents" to gain an entrance among the infidels, and took my seat. After a few minutes, an elderly man, one of the chief managers, moderators, and actors among them, with whom I had formed a slight acquaintance on former occasions, by the name of Benjamin Offen, rose and commenced his harangue. Mr. Offen, I have been informed, has departed this life, entertaining his deistical sentiments to the last: so his friends seemed to think; but whether infidel sentiments can with composure of mind be cherished in a dying hour, is exceedingly doubtful. It is due to him to say, that, as far as I was able to ascertain the fact, he bore a good moral character for honesty and fair dealing with his fellow-man. What a pity he refused to "render to God the things that are God's." His address at that time had not anything in it very remarkable. He was a shrewd deist, with considerable historical knowledge within his memory's available reach, with ready utterance; but there was a characteristic infidel bluntness about him—a coarseness, which was to the good taste of the hearers unpleasant. He commenced by saying: "The Bible is solely the production of man—of priestcraft, which through remote ages of the world has had existence. Bible religion, as it is called, is a system of non-

sense. The Christian system is, from its very nature, calculated to operate injuriously upon the ignorant and superstitious classes of mankind; and it also affords means for the acquiring of power and wealth to the ambitious and cunning leaders in it. This system is oppressive and tyrannical—making the poor poorer, and the rich richer; and taxing the honest labours of the working-classes in supporting the idle preachers of it."

Such was the character of the sentiments Mr. Offen held forth. He spoke about twenty minutes, and sat down. Presently he rose again, and said: "If there is any Christian professor in the assembly, I challenge him to a defence of his favourite system." At this the person sitting next me, a professor of religion, acquainted with me, entreated me to rise and speak. Before I was aware of it, I was on my feet. I walked forth, and "mounted the rostrum." Many of the infidel philanthropists knew me; and by their pleased appearance I supposed they thought I was still with them in sentiment, and would attempt to confirm what had been spoken by Offen. I had no premeditation to guide me, and needed none. I commenced by saying: "I have seen many things lately, but I have not seen you for some time past. I have

been to a Methodist camp-meeting, where many people were gathered—old and young, rich and poor, and good and bad. I have heard what they call good preaching, and singing too; and I have heard praying such as I never heard before, and, I have reason to believe, such as God heard. I have witnessed a good deal of effort, in apparent sincerity, to serve God, and to induce others to do likewise."

By certain indications among my old friends, given by winking and responses of "Ay, ay," I began to think they took me to be in fun with them. I had partly anticipated this, and acted accordingly. Cold reasoning with an infidel I have never had much faith in. He needs something that will strike fire into his heart, like Mons. Maillifert's contrivance to ignite powder, in his submarine explosions.

Curiosity, from my manner, being aroused, attention was secured; and I went on to relate my experience, in a serious and earnest tone of voice—that being most suitable to the state of my heart. I proceeded: "While I saw all around me engaged in the worship of the living and true God, and in a spiritual manner, I felt that there was heart in it, and truth, and life, and power. I was entreated to go and kneel at the bench they had prepared for seeking penitents, and join with

them in praying for the salvation of my soul. I complied with the urgent request of a Methodist man, and went to the mourners' bench—and prayed, and struggled, and agonized. Trembling seized my frame. I was fearful that in my rebellious infidelity I had gone too far to still be within the reach of mercy. I abandoned all worldly comfort. I laboured two days, in persevering strife, to find peace with God. Sleep had forsaken my eyelids, and I loathed my food. The third day, with a vow not to taste of food again, nor drink, until reconciled with offended Majesty—nigh driven to self-destruction by opposing force—I found peace in believing in Jesus!—that same Jesus you here revile Sabbath after Sabbath, and I have so often insulted in the same way. It was through the efficacy of his atoning blood that my sins were blotted out; and I am happy. I know I was not deceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, who shed abroad the love of God in my heart. Through this "Spirit of Truth" I testify to you to-day, that that religion is true which you pronounce a lie! I know for myself, and not another, that you are deceived, and will finally be lost, unless you take refuge in Christ."

This testimony was like hurling a stone into a hornets' nest. In the midst of the excitement and agitation of the infidels, Offen rose and said:

"The audience will be a little calm. I have no fears from what has been said by our warm friend; he is of an excitable temperament, and I am pleased with warmth myself. I have seen persons like him before; but such feelings as he has evinced to-day never last long. As for the Newark man, he has kept us from drowsiness, and I thank him for it; he will soon be himself again. My word for it, his enthusiasm will soon evaporate, and in three months he will be as good a deist as ever." I have heard that he himself was once a professor of religion.

The meeting was then closed; and while we were retiring, a gentleman, evidently a Spaniard, took me by the arm going down the stairs, and I was a little frightened, thinking he designed my hurt; but he wished to communicate something to me which I could not understand. He walked some distance with me up the Bowery, and manifested great feeling. With tears and a hearty shake of the hand he left me. What good he had experienced, or any other of those gathered at Tammany Hall that day, I know not; but I felt that my own soul was blessed in my effort to do good.

My next visit to the Philanthropists, at their appointed place of meeting, was but a few weeks after the first interview with them. Satisfying

the demand of the "three-cent" taxgatherer, at the door of the Hall, in order to enjoy the liberty of infidel privileges, I seated myself to hear what might be said. After due preliminaries, a young man, whose name I did not ascertain, took his stand at the desk and addressed the assemblage. He was evidently a young man of talent and gifts, which fact he seemed not willing should remain concealed; he nevertheless seemed to be of genteel deportment. His discourse was characterized by attempts to prove the inutility of revelation. He said: "We need not such a revelation as the Bible is claimed to be, to instruct us in what our duty consists to one another. We may know what is right without the Bible. The Bible is, therefore, no true revelation from God. Morality and virtue, always being desirable, are inculcated upon us by the outbeaming manifestation of God's approbation of them in the works of nature, and not in the Bible, as its admirers have so often and repeatedly asserted. The works of God, by their unbroken harmony, as unfolded in the sciences of geography, geology, and astronomy, all teach us —if we would but listen to their voice—that we should practise justice, and what is right with one another. There is a goodness in nature, if we would but appreciate it, that will fill us with the

spirit of itself, teaching us benevolence and charity. There is an unvarying order throughout the visible creation which has a perfect response in all natural inclinations, if not spoiled by education; and it is at war with that oracle which has been originated and managed by priestcraft, for so many centuries, to the injury of mankind."

The Hall was filled with persons of a respectable appearance—heads and faces of both male and female that indicated intelligence more than ordinary; that is, considering the character of the meeting. The young man's address was so near in sentiment to what is held by some professors of religion, and his voice was so very pleasant, that there was evinced considerable interest in him. The intelligent faces soon turned toward me, as I was pointed out and beckoned to as the "defender of the faith." I had nothing to fear on the ground of Christianity not being sufficient to support itself. I had good assurance that it "must increase" with advancing time, until all forms of infidelity and error shall fall before it powerless and dead; that its glorious Author "shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath," and ride on "conquering and to conquer," with "death and hell chained to his chariot wheels," until this world becomes a "Paradise Regained." But proud strong ones composed the assembly around me, with their hearts

and minds bent wrong; and how could I show them their "crooked and perverse" state, and point out the errors in the address to which they had been listening with pleasure? It is hard to penetrate through the tough hide in which prejudice wraps its subjects. I proceeded in my reply, in substance, as follows: "There might be more eloquent sound than solid truth in the oration you have been listening to, my friends. In opposition to what has been asserted, I think we *do* need a revelation given to us by the inspiration of God; for nature does not teach us the 'chief good.' The heathen, through all past ages, have had nature, with all its works, to teach them the knowledge of God; but has such knowledge been to any great degree accurate, and has it prevailed to any desirable extent? Will the knowledge of God among the heathen compare at all with that which is known of the true God by the Christian world? Now all this superiority in civil, political, moral, and religious qualities of the Christian world, to the heathen, is attributable to this superior knowledge of God received from the Bible, which is so justly claimed to be a divine revelation. We need, then, just such a revelation; for it is a revelation without the slightest flaw. The millions that have, in honesty of heart, gone to its pages for 'instruction in

righteousness,' are a cloud of witnesses in its favour. See the change wrought in the heart, character, and life of those who bring their souls by faith in naked contact with its potent truths. Many of these truths are of such a character that they may be made the subject of experiment, and be known to a certainty, beyond a possibility of doubt. Declamation by sinful man against the divinity of the Bible shows both its supernatural origin and its need. If sinful man had originated that book, it would be found suitable to sinful taste and congenial to sinful nature: but this is not the case.

"Again: Morality and virtue are *not* desired by man in his natural state. What is naturally desirable in morals is naturally practised. Do good moral principles and virtuous conduct everywhere abound? Do we see nothing opposed to the moral law, and amiable qualities, among our fellow-men in a state of nature? Who is able rationally to think it? And yet it has been asserted here this morning, and many of you, doubtless, have taken it for truth. To receive such sentiments, in preference to Bible doctrines, does not argue an inclination to goodness in man, as an innate principle, but the very opposite.

"And furthermore, nature's works, so called, do not teach us God's ways, Spirit, and will, when

we consider fairly that we all need forgiving mercy to be declared unto us through an infallible medium from God, our offended sovereign. Are we not all in lack of spiritual purity? Are we not conscious that we have some time or other in our lives done what we know was wrong? What can we then do without forgiveness? and who can forgive, and make this known unto us, but God? There has certainly no saving efficacy ever been experienced from the works of nature. When has the Spirit of goodness ever filled a man's heart through the study of nature's works? Natural inclination may lead to the belief of this absurdity, when set forth in pleasing style; but this is an argument also against the sufficiency of nature's works to reveal God, in a saving sense, to his sinful creatures, and in favour of a Bible revelation.

"The eloquent description of the Creator's works, in their unbroken harmony throughout all the known parts of the universe, is also faulty in one other characteristic, namely, the lack of truth. It is not true that such order and exact symmetry, as are in accordance to the measurement of human rules, appear everywhere in the works of nature. Diversity and want of sameness appear in almost everything around us. The mountains of all shapes and sizes—no two alike—jagged and

craggy, give us an idea of the true aspect of other things in this respect. The trees and the 'deep-tangled wildwood,' with their limbs branching in every direction—leaves of every form imaginable; the rivers in zigzag angles and curves, without symmetry or apparent order; the clouds in fantastic shapes, ever varying their forms and hues, carried about by unsteady winds, appearing and disappearing constantly, are out of symmetrical measure and order: and the entire world exhibits the same want of what might be called order, through invariable variations. The planets in the solar system, with the comets, all vary in their respective distances from each other, and from their centre of motion; and that, too, without any sign of regular gradations in their differences. Their sizes, situations, motions, appendages, and specific gravity, are all out of order—especially that kind of order attributed to them this morning. The human physiognomy, in order to the preservation of distinctions in personal identity, has the same marks of diversity. Now the Bible, with the religion it teaches, like the rest of God's own works, has the same diversity and variety blended with its unity; and contains, therefore, no 'cunningly devised fables,' but the only true light, to shine upon the darkness of human nature. Had man's inclinations been

wholly guided by its inspiration, no discrepancy would have been suspected between the order of its arrangement and the order of the works of creation. Had the light of the lamp of God been but the guide of man's footsteps, how much evil would have been avoided; how much error would have been removed; and how much happiness would have been secured! Let not, then, your natural desires prove too strong for your better judgment!"

After this reply, given in substance above, the meeting was closed, and I was invited to visit them again.

Christianity sustains itself by its own power. It is reported of Napoleon Bonaparte, that near the close of his life he said, "The peculiarity of Christ's religion is its self-subsisting energy." This is true, whether Napoleon said it or not. What a glorious thought that it is so, and that its universal spread is certain!

After a few months I visited for the third time the infidels, at the Hall of Old Tammany. The "three-cent man," Cerberus-like, sat at the door, and received my tax-money. Mr. Offen, after pressing the juice from an orange into his mouth, began to express his infidel sentiments from his heart into the ears of his congregation. He said: "Knavery and cunning, to a very consider-

able extent, mark the character of preachers of the gospel. Hypocrisy and deception are everywhere to be met with in the leaders and officers of the Churches. And fools, and brainless ninnies, are the masses of Church-members, that, like young robins, are ready at all times to gulp down whatever is given them from the pulpit. And I find that preachers are very careful to have a discipline, by which they secure to themselves a good salary. Money is the only object for which they labour. How much better is our freedom, with our light, and science, and truth, than their delusions. We have no set rules to bind us hand and foot—we delight in liberty of opinion. We hate bigotry, and will oppose it, 'tooth and nail,' wherever it may be found. We love our country, and will support whatever goes to effect its entire freedom."

I was invited to make a reply, and rose for the purpose. While I was standing at the desk, doing the best I could to show the fallacy of what had been said, Mr. Offen jumped up and took me by the skirt of my coat, and pulled me backward, saying that I had misrepresented him. He had said, "The philanthropists have no *creed* of moral precepts laid upon them." In reference to this I had said, "Mr. Offen exults in not being under a *code* of moral precepts." The dif-

ference was in *creed* and *code*. I acknowledged being corrected, and did not get angry to please Offen.

I proceeded to remark, after being interrupted, something after the following: "The religion of Christ can be tested by experience. It is the work of the Spirit and power of God, and is established in the hearts of 'many witnesses.' It is, in reference to the soul, everywhere surrounding us, as the atmosphere we breathe is surrounding our bodies. I know its existence in my heart, as well as I know I have eyes, and bones, and blood. I know that Jesus Christ, who was once dead, is now alive, and that it was through him that I experienced religion. Your efforts against this Christ, and his religion, show the blindfolded state of your souls; but they must be fruitless in breaking down that 'Great Rock,' the shadow of which you so much stand in need of in this weary land. There are *two facts*, at least, that you never can account for, on the ground you occupy—viz., the resurrection of Christ, and the conversion of the Apostle Paul.

"Now, if there be any here who have ever prayed earnestly in the name of Jesus, tell me, Do you not recollect some occasions on which you received answers to your petitions for mercy? Did not the blessed Spirit bring to your heart

those answers with much assurance? Will you ever forget what balm was applied to your wounded spirits? What peace, love, comfort, and joy, came and charmed, with heavenly fragrance, the hour of your espousals to the Saviour? O sweet days, forever gone! Bright hopes forever fled! Delightful seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, far, far, beyond recall! [Just here, a woman sobbed aloud, and wept, that she might have been heard by all present. I continued.] You, poor soul! backslidden, no doubt, from God, turn again to Jesus. He is all forgiveness, and will receive you into favour. He will heal all your backslidings. [Here another interruption ensued by the peace-loving moderator, who informed me aloud, that I was not in a Methodist meeting, and need not exhort in order to work on the feelings. Amid the agitation I raised my voice higher still, and proceeded.] And you, moderator, no doubt, feel in your conscience that I have the right side of the question. Are you not, even now, resisting the Spirit of God? O, you who practise deception upon yourselves and others, God will hold you accountable for your conduct!"

Mr. Offen immediately rose, and said: "This matter about prayers being answered, as has been asserted, can be settled on the spot. Let S——

just pray for his Jesus Christ to drop down *a cent* before us all; and if his prayer is answered, why, we will not hesitate to believe all he has said, and not without."

I saw at this time, in the congregation, a deist of my acquaintance from Newark, who was making ineffectual efforts to refrain from weeping. He, a few days before, had requested me never again to speak to him on the subject of religion. Two or three days after this, meeting him in the street, I inquired "Why he wept while I was speaking in Tammany Hall?" He replied, "Who thought you would have been there! And I was fool enough to think, that if what you said was true, you had something that I had not. But I'll risk all that now."

The last time I participated in the exercises at Tammany Hall, they invited me to take the lead. I felt the weight of the cross, and the Bible lay open before me on the desk. I thought of the eternity and power of the word, and its Spirit of inspiration. I opened my mouth, and my soul was "full of matter." Without previous thought or meditation, I commenced by laying down the following propositions, viz.:—

1. That the religion of Christ is really *something.*

2. That this something, which contains the

whole, and nothing more, of the religion of the Bible, is *good* and *true*, without mixture of evil or error.

3. That this something good and true, called the Christian religion, being distinctly foreign from what is common to man in a state of nature, must necessarily be *divine.*

I proceeded to show that the religion of Jesus Christ is really something.

This religion is a *fact* in the world. It is to be so viewed. This fact has a self-subsisting energy. It remains where it is opposed by every element in the natural man. Yet witnesses in every age have testified of its existence. They have not been all noted liars. It is an unchangeable fact, proved so by the millions that have witnessed it, and by the millions that have opposed it. Do not infidels themselves admit the religion of Christ to be something, in the opposition they manifest in their efforts against it? How could they make *nothing* an object of resistance?

That this something, which contains the whole of the religion of the Bible, and nothing more, is good and true, without mixture of evil or error.

Nothing must be included in the idea of Christ's religion but that which does essentially belong to it. The sayings and teachings of the original Founder of this system must give us the

definite idea of it. We must see this religion separated from everything but itself, in order to know of its essential and inherent *properties.* The fountain from whence flows this spiritual stream, that has watered the Church and refreshed the people of God in all ages, is the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it was said, while he was on earth, by his enemy, "I find no fault in him." He, by his doctrine and Spirit, claims to establish the hearts of his believing followers in all the principles involved in love to God and good-will to man. This love has been manifested in men's lives, and is wholly good. Good-will to man has also been evinced by Christians; and this, too, is undeniably good.

But is this all true about the principles of Christianity being entirely good? To deny it, is to give the lie to the united testimony of the wisest and best of men in every age; and with all their known purity of life to assert that they lied, in triumphs of joy, while dying! Let a thousand mathematicians each work one of Euclid's problems; will not the thousand agree, although not permitted to consult with each other? Does not such an argument prove truth to be the ascertained result of their investigations? The truth of the love of God, with all its good principles, is found by the millions who make the experiment,

in a point of unchangeable agreement with one another. They are of one mind, and testify to the same thing.

You yourselves declare publicly that professors of religion are *hypocrites*, when they practise what they do not profess. And bad acts, by you, are attributed to something as the cause, unlike Christianity. But hypocrisy you never charge upon an *infidel*, when he goes to the gallows for a crime committed. Did you ever in your lives really think that faith in Christ is capable of leading men to steal and murder? And yet you dare not say that crimes do make a man *less* an infidel than he was before!

Had there been any error, in fact or principle, in Christ's religion, it would have been overthrown ere now. The infirmities and faults of Christians constitute no part of the religion of the Bible. The system of Christ contains no errors, but truth's matter and spirit fill up all his words of eternal life to man.

That this something good and true, called the Christian religion, being distinctly foreign from what is common to man in a state of nature, must necessarily be divine.

That man is evil, needs no proof greater than what every man carries in his own breast. Cruelties, crimes, and abominations make up a great

proportion of human history. To assert that man has originated the Bible, with its religion, is to assert that good can emanate from evil, and truth from falsehood. No man, nor set of men, has ever claimed to be the originating cause of the Bible, nor the religion it teaches. From every consideration, the good and true God is the author of both. Both are claimed to be of him, both are worthy of him, and both prove, by their undeviating influence and effects, to be his, and call loudly upon all men to yield implicit obedience to the saving plan, and the divine will contained in them.

After speaking, in substance, as above, I wished the speaker who should follow me to take up my propositions in consecutive order, and dispose of them rationally and righteously. If fallacy could be detected, I wished that it might be exposed. The "something" of religion must be either denied or admitted. The goodness and truth of it must be either denied or admitted. The claim of its divinity must be concluded upon from the truth or falsehood of the propositions, and arguments to sustain them.

After taking my seat, B. Offen got up in evident agitation, and said, looking at me, "I would not give a bladder of wind (!) for your arguments, or your feelings either." He then surveyed the

congregation, with a sneering smile, and proceeded, by saying, "I don't know but these Christians are praying that I may be confused—at any rate it is time to close the meeting." While the people were retiring, Mr. Offen beckoned to me to tarry behind, and said, "Did you not receive from some of your friends a quarter of veal or a leg of mutton for your services here?" I replied, "Not at all, sir." "Have you not received pay of any kind for coming here?" he inquired. Being answered in the negative, I left the place, and have endeavoured once or twice since to have a hearing among them on the subject of religion, but have failed, through the moderation of the moderators. They seemed to be so in love with liberty, that they desired to keep it all to themselves, without allowing others, with them, to have the privilege of its enjoyment. The most tyrannical bigots to be found are the infidels; and the greatest enemy that true liberty has ever had is stubborn-headed and corrupt-hearted infidelity.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### CALL TO THE MINISTRY.

No employment can *eclipse* the object of saving a soul from death.—SUMMERFIELD.

GOD has ever had, in every age of the Church, a chosen, called, and duly qualified ministry to proclaim his truth to the rebellious sons and daughters of fallen Adam. And this ministry, though "set at naught" by many, has ever been distinguished by its spiritual success and other evangelical marks, from a ministry of the world's own selection. The choice which God has been pleased to make of men from time to time, in the different ages of his Church, has been very much at variance with that choice which men have made. Ministers who have been qualified by merely human means, and have preached to secure "a living," or from a sense of benevolence, or because the exercise was agreeable to them and their friends, have not been of that stamp that God has promised to be with always, "even to the end of the world," and to own and bless. Such ministers have done immense harm, not only to themselves, but to all who have sustained

them. But the men who have been truly called to minister in holy things, have been such as have been most astonished at the choice made, in putting *them* into the ministry. The call of a *member* of the Church to the ministry is often attended with conviction of the fact, growing upon the more prominent *members* of the same Church, for a length of time before the individual called feels deeply on the subject. And when such call is beginning to settle down upon him in fixed conviction, how often is he astonished that the wise God should make *such* a selection! When persons think they are called to preach, when that "*think so*" is supported solely by an *impression*, which impression is without a response in the convictions of their brethren, with whom they are in Church-fellowship, then it is quite likely *their* call is a *false* one. When I was convinced of my duty to preach the gospel, I was not alone in the conviction of that fact; and had I resisted the spirit of that call from secular motives, I would, no doubt, have been in deplorable companionship with some who may read these pages. And yet, "by the grace of God, I am what I am."

The first few years of my religious life seemed to be marked, in great measure, by opposite realities. I had many seasons of joy in the midst

of sorrows and afflictions. I had, in the outset, anticipated one continued scene of spiritual entertainment, without a doubt, a trial, or a fear to mar the quiet and delight that feasted my soul from day to day.

> "I could not believe
> That I ever should grieve,
> That I ever should suffer again."

I expected to live in the city of Newark, where I had enjoyed such sweet seasons of soul-refreshing from the presence of the Lord, in company with God's people—to spend my life there, where in boyhood's days I had formed a strong attachment to the place, and prepared memory to carry in her long journey endearing relics of early associations—and to lay my bones there with those of my kindred, and brothers in Christ, when my life on earth should end. But there are in the ways of Providence and grace mysteries, and apparent paradoxes, not to be unravelled "before the time." We know not what a day may bring forth.

The cross of speaking in class-meeting, and of praying in public prayer-meetings, I had persevered in taking up and bearing as well as I could, with an eye single to the glory of God, for about six months, before the burden of a class-paper

was laid upon me, which appeared at the time more than I could bear. Yet, like the wings of a bird that bear it aloft, the Spirit strengthened me to carry the burden it imposed. Like a dreaded serpent, before touched, it became a rod of power in the hand of obedience. So I have found all duties we owe to God. The more readily we engage in them, the easier they are performed.

Class-leading is an important spiritual duty, and requires peculiar qualifications in order to its proper performance. It is a work to which a Methodist preacher is appointed, and which he must himself perform, or have performed by suitable representatives. A class-leader should, therefore, be like the preacher he represents, a spiritual person, and a good judge of moral character. He should have clear views of regeneration—being born again himself—of justification by faith, and of sanctification. He should have a correct knowledge of the saving doctrines, and of the precious promises. In Christian experience he should be "no novice," that he may be able to correct, reprove, and teach in the way of salvation the members of his class. He should be acquainted with the Methodist discipline and economy, to give a proper direction to temporal as well as spiritual operations. Lack in any of the above particulars is attended with

harm to members of the class, and to the influence and prosperity of the Church. Were all the leaders just what they ought to be, what a salutary effect would be produced in the Churches to which they belong! I am far from decrying our leaders—we have among them some of the very best of men. But the importance of the office is such, that ability and faithfulness in it would afford results of immense benefit. How great should leaders feel their responsibilities to be, in order to "magnify their office."

I was chosen leader of a class by the Rev. S. Higgins, and I felt my incompetency to the great work. I needed gracious help from God, and prayed for it, going forward in the way of duty with good intentions. That my zeal was often more than a proper balance for my knowledge is quite likely, and from some cause—not hurtful, I was informed, to my moral or religious character—my class, by a succeeding preacher, was given to another leader, and I was freed from the burden. The tears of the preacher, as he received the class-paper from my hand, gave me a good opinion of his *motive*, and that he acted in his own conscience with a view to the best interests of the Church, and was a faithful watchman upon her walls. That his knowledge of me, at the time, was rather superficial and imperfect, from

*unfaithful* reports, unknown to me, is not at all improbable. Some of my friends were grieved at this dismissal, and some desired *me* to be more grieved than I was, for *their* satisfaction. But I met in the same class, and did all I could to keep things from taking a wrong turn, in reference to others as well as myself, knowing that God would be pleased with such a course. It was not long before I was again requested to take the leadership of a class, which I readily complied with, as well as I was able. This whole affair resulted in my good, in its final issue. It made me more watchful over my own heart, and more dependent on God to *lead me* and defend me in all things. It also made me more slow to believe every report that might chance to be put in circulation about a brother. Severities are often experienced by the people of God from one another, to their mutual benefit.

In accordance with the feelings of my brethren in the Church, and especially the official members, in less than a year after my conversion I received from the preacher in charge, and the concurrent vote of the quarterly conference, license to exhort. This I had in no way solicited, and yet it was not in opposition to my inward conviction of duty; for I never could feel free to exhort or preach unless recognised as a suitable person by the

regular license afforded me by the Church. The persons who exhort and preach without such license have never yet convinced me of their enlightened piety, or extensive usefulness.

In my labours as an exhorter I was happy, and yet I felt the weight of my responsibility, and my weakness in bearing it. Some fruit appeared, in the awakening and conversion of sinners. My brothers, my sister, my mother, and my wife, were much on my mind, and I conversed with them as often as I could on the subject of their souls' salvation. And I prayed for them daily more than once. These were converted to God, after much anxiety on my part had been felt for them. Fruits of my labour in other respects appeared; but while it encouraged me to know that God was with me, it did not increase my joy to think too much on *my* success in winning souls to Christ. I was not without temptations and trials. Sometimes by the enemy of my soul I was lifted too high, and sometimes depressed too low. I needed the Bible to guide me.

Some occurrences at that time I would here notice, in order to guard the young Christian reader against a spirit of presumption and pride—those evils the young convert is so liable of being drawn into. There was in the city an old Frenchman,

whose occupation was a cheap kind of likeness-taking. He was a noted infidel, and fond of the ridiculous. I thought of visiting him in order to endeavour to persuade him to seek religion. I was told by those more acquainted with the old man not to go, as he had been spoken to by them without effect. I thought it might be my faith was stronger than theirs, and I paid him a visit. He was in his *studio*, and soon after entering I said, "Mr. B——, do you not feel the need of the religion of the Bible? You are growing old, and I think you ought to seek an acquaintance with God, through Christ, before you die." He replied, "I have great fault to find with your religion, and your devil, too! You call him de prince of de wind, and say he fly all abroad; and you paint him wid a monkey tail! Such a tail not fit to guide him. A turkey tail would be more suitable! I no like your religion, nor your devil." My faith in doing good to him failed, and I left him. He has since died, and may now know the *character of his objections* to Christianity!

On one occasion, while I was walking to the place of worship, where I expected to exhort after the sermon, I was so unwatchful over myself that I was carried away, for a season, with spiritual pride. The sermon by the stationed preacher

being closed, I was invited to give an exhortation from the altar. I went forward in my own strength, and commenced, "My beloved brethren, I thank God that *our carnals are not weapon.*" Confusion came over my mind, and hot flushes were felt in my face, and I rallied with reinforced determination to give an exhortation, and repeated: "I say, my friends, that our *carnals are not* weapon! My friends, I say *my thoughts have left me*"—(the bright thoughts studied out along the way to the Church, in order that they might have something good.) I sat down, and was profitably humbled.

On Sabbath afternoon, between the hours of public preaching, I was in the habit, with others, of holding meetings on the wharf, near where the Bethel now stands. Once while I was bearing my message to sinners there, a man of intemperate habits came and stood directly before me, with a large jug in his hand. This did not dampen my ardour in the least, but, by giving additional evidence of the need of the word of God to be preached among such people as gathered there on the Sabbath-day, tended to increase my feelings, and I exhorted sinners with all my might to "flee from the wrath to come." After I was done speaking I kneeled down to pray, and the mouth of the huge jug was just under

my nose, held there on purpose by the man of rum. I was informed that this jug-man was hired to do what he did by the promise of having his jug filled for him with good liquor. This daring wretch, within six months from that time, died, as he had lived—without hope.

On another occasion, being in the city of New-York, I went down early in the morning to the North River, not far from Barclay-street, and got permission of the captain of a vessel to take my stand on deck, and exhort sinners to repentance. The vessel lay close to the dock, and soon the deck was covered with hearers of the word; and while I was depicting the deceitfulness of the human heart, in an unregenerate state, a brawny Irishman came up to me, with a huge fist raised, and said, with an oath, "Is it me you mean, sir?" I continued speaking truth, in tenderness, with heart uplifted. But I was light, and the fist was ponderous! To go home mangled and bleeding from my early Sunday exercises was not agreeable. Just then, as I was about submitting as patiently as I could to the striking process anticipated, a sailor, with tarpaulin in careening style, stepped up, tapping me on the shoulder, saying, "Just say what you please while I am here, and I will see you out in it." Then turning to the man of threatening aspect, with a

pugilistic flourish of his fists, he continued: "Mister, just keep a little back; you will see as well: for any more of your sauce will furnish you with a pair of bunged blinkers!" The aggressor, with orbs undimmed, speedily departed, and I, without further molestation, proceeded to the close of my exhortation; after which, a gentleman on the opposite side of the vessel arose and said, in substance: "I would like to bear my testimony in favour of religion. Little more than a year ago I was a poor drunkard, working on the canal. There was a meeting held on one of the boats, like the one here this morning, which I attended—for I was too poorly dressed to go inside of a church. On that occasion an exhortation from a young man, a tract distributer, reached my heart. From that time I sought the Lord, until my soul was converted, which was within a few weeks. I am now happy, and the appetite to drink intoxicating liquors has left me." He exhorted a while, and then prayed. He was a good singer, and a fine looking man—and a brand snatched from the burning. I became acquainted with him afterward, and he was a good member of the Church. Much good has been done by self-sacrificing and cross-bearing efforts, to bring sinners into the fold of Christ; and more might still be done than is done, if the zeal and love

that burned in the apostles and first Methodist preachers were kindled afresh in the hearts of their successors.

About one year and a half after my conversion, I began to fear that I might one day feel it my duty to God to preach the gospel. I kept this a secret from my brethren in the Church for about two years, thinking it might be nothing but temptation. This was partly owing to a circumstance which occurred while I was in the ardent feelings of my first love. While a young convert, I had been enticed by a friend, who believed it to be my duty to preach immediately, to make trial of my preaching talents. The Methodist Protestant Church in Mulberry-street was the place appointed to test my call to the ministry. It had been given out that I would preach on the evening of a Sabbath, and curiosity led many there to hear the sermon. I was advised by the friend to make no preparation, and I obeyed his instructions to the letter. The time for preaching arrived, and my friend and the preacher sat together in the pulpit; but no text had yet come to be preached. I was encouraged not to be alarmed, for that would come whenever I would open my mouth to preach, and surely I did not want to use it till then. After singing and praying, I rose to commence preaching. I opened the Bible, and began to

read in order to find the text, which I was informed would *fasten* on my mind whenever I should come to it. It was the last chapter in Mark's Gospel; and as no text seized upon me, I seized upon the sixteenth verse. My preaching state of mind by this time was not the most delightful, but I did the best I could. I began by saying: "My friends, believing is a thing that ought to be done, and it ought to be done soon, and you must all believe. Now to believe a thing is to—to *believe a thing.* To be damned is not to believe, and to be saved is to be *saved.* I feel uncommonly bad, my friends. I don't know what I am saying myself. I do hope that somebody will come up here and preach, for I believe *I* am not called." I sat down, but the seat was too high; I wanted to be out of sight of the congregation. One source of relief to cheer my drooping spirits was left me, however, to congratulate myself with. While going home that night, being concealed by the darkness and the crowd, I heard some apprentice boy say, "Well, I believe the preacher is a good man, although he does not know much!" This was some comfort.

The above circumstance in my memory, whenever I was consulted on the subject of my probable call to preach, weighed heavily on my spirits. I did not wish to preach if I could well avoid it.

I believed that, as many called to preach had not obeyed, so also many had run before they were sent. I had many serious thoughts at times on the subject; but I quieted my fears as well as I could, by resting on my conscious inability to preach.

One day, under much heaviness and temptation, I received a letter from the Rev. Mr. Cookman, urging me not to attempt to smother my convictions of a call to the ministry if I had any. His words were to me ominous, alarming, and timely. To receive such a letter, at such a time, under such circumstances, from such an instructor, on such an important subject, seemed to me providential. Grace and providence, like two wheels, exactly correspond in their union, motions, and designs, working together in accordance with the will of God.

My past preaching I could not forget, while meditating on Mr. Cookman's letter. A new preacher was sent to us by the conference, and I soon became acquainted with him. I found him kind; but my heart failed in an endeavour to make him acquainted with my trouble about preaching. One day, in peculiar tenderness, he said to me: "Dear brother, have you not had impressions of your probable duty yet to preach the gospel? Have you not seriously anticipated that you might yet be called to exercise your

talents and gifts in this way?" I said something in reply, and with much emotion bid him good morning. At another interview with this minister I had explanations given me on the call to the ministry, temptations and trials connected with it, supporting and qualifying grace promised, and advice and instruction imparted that I desire never to forget. He put things in a proper train, in order to give me a trial at preaching. I was advised by him to write out my sermon and submit it to his inspection, if I could feel free to do so. I complied, and was told it was creditable. I was then advised to use it in the pulpit, as it would help me to overcome my embarrassment. I did use it in this way, and preached one other, immediately succeeding the first sermon, with the written copy before me. This was in compliance with the judicious advice of that prudent minister, to whom I shall always feel great indebtedness, as an instrument in the hand of God for introducing me into the field of labour, the consequences of which are of vital importance. In remembrance of his wise counsels, painstaking, and perseverance, my prayer is that he may be continued long a useful and beloved member of the New-Jersey Conference, while the memory of his unworthy brother shall hold in increasing endearment the name of the Rev. Thomas M'Carroll.

Receiving license from the proper authority as a local preacher, I laboured in my sphere, in the cause of God, with a strong impression that I was indeed called of him to preach the gospel.

For nearly four years, through the confidence of my brethren in the Church, I occupied the responsible position of a local preacher, and many were the happy seasons I enjoyed during that period. I realized myself to be a "helper" in the charge where I belonged, and gave the stationed minister to understand that I would, if possible, always be "on hand" to help him in filling such appointments best suited to his convenience. Although my sermons lacked polish, I knew, if I answered my call, God would call hearers. With the verdict of the *Church*, and the confirmation of *hearers*, I had the witness of the *Spirit*, and I was encouraged in the work; and the more I felt the "burden of the Lord" upon me, the more I felt my own weakness. The responsibility seemed great, as it certainly was. When temptations to give up preaching would assail me, Jonah's "whale" was after me, and Paul's "woe" chased me.

One day I was directed by a person—now no doubt in heaven—to go to a certain store, where I would find a package with my name upon it. I went, and found Dr. Adam Clarke's Com-

mentary on the New Testament, a present from some one still to me unknown. I studied it with profit, as much as my limited time would permit. Certainly this appeared to be a token of divine favour in the work of saving souls.

In the capacity of a local preacher I expected to remain, my license to be renewed from year to year—my conduct comporting with the gospel of Christ—during my sojourn on earth. I, however, was recommended by my brethren to the New-Jersey Conference, as a suitable person to be a travelling preacher, for three successive years. Such a recommendation satisfied my conscience that *not* travelling as a Methodist itinerant was not my fault, and I was just as happy in not being received as though I had been. I knew the Lord would never require me to utter his truth in a certain way, when a "door of utterance" in that way was not opened by him.

On my recommendation for the fourth time, I was received on trial in the New-Jersey Conference. It was at the session of this body held in Newark, New-Jersey, in the spring of 1841. This was to me an unexpected event; yet I viewed it as an expression of the will of God that I should be "thrust out" in this way. The Lord had converted, and taken my mother to heaven; two of my young children he had removed from

earth to "the better country;" the business in which I was engaged, as my daily occupation, was just about closing, and other indications of Providence appeared that the time had fully come when I must obey the call of God in an itinerating sense, to "go forth weeping, bearing precious seed." Sore were my trials, some time previous to my going out as a travelling preacher, from several causes; but much from temptation. One most painful event was the parting with our youngest child, a daughter but three and a half years old. The precocity, in manifestations of mind and heart, of "little Margaret," made her a favourite with us, and when we were called to part with her it was nearly heart-breaking. I felt my weakness as I surveyed her articles of dress and plaything memorials left behind. They reminded me sadly of her smiles, merry prattling, and fond embraces, to be enjoyed on earth no more. But she became another magnet of attraction in heaven, and I needed more weaning from the world, and experienced it.

In departing from Newark, to labour in the vineyard, I left many friends; but for such work no sacrifices can be too great. In my "goings forth" from place to place, I have often thought of the great commission of Christ being carried out more fully in the Methodist itinerancy than in any other

way at present adopted. Staying in one place to preach all a man's lifetime, may be agreeable to "flesh and blood;" but who can believe it more agreeable to the plainest declarations of Scripture, than the travelling plan of the Methodist Episcopal Church? I heard it once stated by a Unitarian of some note, that he believed the itinerant system was the best adapted to Methodist preachers, because their talents were too limited to afford the people a continual and sufficient variety. The romantic variety of Unitarian moral essays he considered of more value, I presume, than the gospel truth of the one atonement. As to versatile talents for preaching the gospel, the Methodist preachers will compare favourably with any other class; and, the best of all is, God has generally been with them. In what way, I would ask, according to available information on the subject, has the gospel brought more of its real benefits to the people and institutions of these United States, than through the labours of Methodist preachers? The "more excellent way" of preaching the word may easily be discovered by its practical effects upon those who are brought under its influence. The excellency of God's saving power is consigned to "earthen vessels" for distribution. Learned or unlearned, the vessels bearing gospel

"treasure" must be considered "earthen," or the ministers, "verily, will have their reward." The gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel, is to be preached in its own power and spirit, by those moved to it by the Holy Ghost. "Itching ears" may be tickled with "sounding brass," the "unruly member" may clamour for "variety," and self-indulgence may seek comfort in *an earthly* "abiding home;" but "God's ways are not our ways."

There is an exclusiveness in the office and work of a gospel minister that makes him a peculiar character. Success in his calling demands that this exclusiveness, in being separated from other employments, set apart for spiritual duties, given to reading, study, and prayer, be strictly observed. If politics, science, or even learning, take and absorb the entire attention, there will be an unfitness for the proper labours of the pulpit. If riches and honour throw before the eye an attraction, and draw away the heart, the preacher, like Samson, is shorn of his locks. The Levites, by divine appointment, had no portion of the land of Canaan. The Lord God was their portion. And the heralds of salvation, under the immediate command of our Lord Jesus Christ, were directed to take neither "purse nor scrip," but were to trust God for all they needed.

This faith in God for daily bread, in its effect upon the hearers of those believing preachers, was designed for good with the rest of preaching influences in the institution of the ministry.

The *style* of gospel preaching is of some importance. When the heart and mind are so swayed by the truth of the word of God and the Holy Ghost that extravagant figures, poetic flowers, and bombastic language will not be thought of nor cared for, then affectation will be hated and despised. When love, and zeal, and sincerity, and humility are in the heart, they *will* be manifested in the words and manners of the preacher. Whatever is—in "abundance"—in the heart, will come out of the mouth. I was once edified by an inflated friend with the remark, "That my preaching would do, *but my prayers were* not *sublime* enough!" Sublime prayers offered to God!

Pulpit *eloquence* is a qualification of importance to the preacher, and many have missed the mark in aiming at it. The first sermon I recollect of hearing—being but a child—gave me a wrong impression. Want of proper pulpit eloquence was the principal cause. Children, in general, have a taste unperverted, though uncultivated. Their feelings are right in painting, poetry, music, as well as morals, as far as they

go. Preaching, when good, is interesting to them. How did they love Summerfield's preaching! and the preaching of a greater than Summerfield, who said, "Forbid them not to come unto me." But the preaching I heard was of a different sort—it made me think of *scolding*. Following the preacher's eye as it seemed to light upon an individual demure and bald, I supposed the obnoxious bald head was the sole cause of offence for which the hail-storm eloquence was poured forth.

I have since heard true eloquence, and good and lasting have been the effects. On such occasions I have felt an influence more than human, as the words of truth came warm and fresh from the preacher's swelling heart. Then the eyes, and every feature in the countenance, with the voice, would speak out with a tongue of fire the dictates of the heart, in a manner which no unconverted, heartless, automaton, manufactured preacher could imitate.

The eloquence peculiar to the pulpit is designed, definitely and specifically, as an instrument in the salvation of mankind. It is part of the gospel system. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." It is, therefore, of a very different character from any other used on earth, having no sympathies in common for it in

unregenerate nature. On the Spirit that inspires it does it depend for the creation of all true sympathies it can have. Such was the eloquence of Jesus and his apostles, and such has ever characterized true evangelical ministers.

There is an eloquence suited to the *bar*. The lawyer has before him a class of mental qualities —a kind of passions—to wake up, excite, and operate upon. His aims in his department of labour are to gain "points of law,"—not, necessarily, gospel.

There is but one human nature on which all kinds of eloquence are made to operate, either regenerate or unregenerate. The eloquence of the lawyer, statesman, or player, should not then come into the pulpit. Nature, unsaved by such eloquence, can be tossed into mountain waves of passion by the tempest, or lulled into ripples by the zephyr; but the heart and moral character will remain unchanged, and left to grow worse and worse.

We need an eloquence of the Holy Ghost's own making;—such as the first Methodist preachers displayed in answering their divine call, and such as is yet at work in dismantling the fortifications of hell! Through such eloquence as could not be gainsayed or resisted, sinners by thousands and millions, since the days of Wes-

ley, have heard the word, have been aided in keeping it, and are now in the climes of endless day. By such eloquence, the ministers of Christ are destined to shake the world from the thraldom of Satan; for the glorious gospel will finally prevail over all opposing forces, and joyous praise and song roll up to heaven from all tongues and hearts of this "paradise regained." "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, . . . to him be glory throughout all ages, world without end."

## CHAPTER IX.

### DEALINGS OF PROVIDENCE.

The belief of an all-wise, all-directing Providence is a powerful support under the most grievous accidents of life.—Dr. Adam Clarke.

Divine Providence affords, with many other blessings, a school for the Christian, wherein he may learn lessons to profit him not only in the present life, but in that life where memory will repeat forever the things learned in time. God is superintending the affairs of men while with them probationary life lasts, and from this source of instruction "a pure language" is heard by the ear of faith. Although equality and justice are not yet seen in equal distribution abroad over the earth, there are, nevertheless, indubitable marks of the divine superintendence, giving cheering assurance that the author of Bible promises still dwells among men, carrying on his saving operations, and will do so to the close of time. Not an event, nor an action, nor a thought the most insignificant in our estimation, but that God sees, and knows, and has reference to in some way in the management of the vast concerns of the universe. "Not a sparrow falls to the ground with-

out his notice," and even the hairs of every human head are all numbered. Most salutary in effect has ever been the contemplation of God's providence in its minute particulars on the Christian mind and heart. But Providence must not be so received as to attribute evil actions to the divine being, nor to divest man of his moral responsibility in the relations sustained between the Supreme Governor and the governed. In the dealings of a gracious Providence I have experienced and observed much that has been instructive to me, and illustrative of Bible truths.

The first time my mind was brought into striking contact with the subject of Divine Providence, in its interposition in the *minutiæ* of human concerns, was while I was in the first class-meeting after my conversion. The leader, being faithful to his calling, after we had enjoyed a sweet season from God's presence, manifested in our exercises, reminded us of our duty in the support we should give to the gospel as preached among us. (I always, since my eyes have been opened, have liked this voluntary way of supporting the ministry; for it is so compatible with the gospel spirit, and is not dependent on the "highest seats in the synagogue" nor an unbelieving world for success.) I felt in my pocket, and, as Providence was to afford me instruction, I had but one shil-

ling there, and had no certain expectation of an earthly source of supply elsewhere. I thought on the loaf my family would need on the morrow; but then the shilling was God's, and so was the loaf, and I too. The thought came with power to me, "Can I exhaust the small means of my support now in my possession if I give my shilling for the support of the divinely instituted means of disseminating the bread of life? Will it cut off my supplies from the Infinite Source if my shilling is given in this way, and deprive me of bread to-morrow?" These were my thoughts, and the smallness of the sum did not depreciate the importance of the question. While thus engaged in thought, a member rose up and said, "It is hard times, and I, *for one*, can give no more money in this way." He was one who had a nice property, and was prospering. His weekly three-cent contribution, that he had for some time adhered to, was withheld, with the motive of bettering his condition.

My shilling, in support of the gospel, was paid to God, its owner, and my pocket was left empty, and I resolved that night that my "mite" should never be kept from the Lord's treasury. I was anxious to have an exhibition of truth in practical every-day matters of life on the subject. It would go further with me than theory. I then

believed that it was just as impossible for a Christian to make himself bankrupt by a proper use of his means—money, talents, and time—to do God's will, as for the sun to lose in bulk and brightness by continual shining, by imparting light and heat to *needy* worlds around him. God, in the same manner, has given us money and talents for the good of others, and made our use of these means inseparable from our own well-being; and as talents are not exhausted by such use, but generally increased, so also wealth is not diminished, but rather augmented. I had bread the next morning, and have adhered to my humble mite-giving without at all endangering my resources. But the *economical* brother soon became bankrupt and backslidden. I saw him in poverty, and thought of his saving determination by withholding from God. He was sober and industrious; he was *stingy;* but how could he increase his capital by attempting to *defraud God?* "Whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap."

At the time of my conversion I was teaching a little school, which afforded me but a very slender support. I soon made it a matter of earnest prayer to God to lead me in all things, temporal as well as spiritual; for I believed that being a Christian required living by faith "the life

that now is," as well as in reference to "that which is to come." I greatly feared choosing my own way, and believed that prayer, in faith, for "our daily bread" was as needful as prayer in faith for "the forgiveness of our trespasses." I soon was convinced that I should seek other employment, as the one in which I was engaged did not afford me a living, and also disagreed with my constitution.

For the purpose of seeking a change of occupation I left home with a friend, who was then decidedly pious, to visit the State of Connecticut during the autumn of 1833. My friend had relatives and acquaintances in that State, and we set off together in his own vehicle. I expected to be absent about two weeks. I found benefit both for soul and body from this trip, and my friend and I wished to do good to others while God was so good to us. For this purpose we visited families during the day for religious conversation with them and prayer, and in the evening we held meetings—my friend was a local preacher—for preaching, exhortation, and relating experience. Delightful, indeed, was this employment to me, and conversions showed themselves as the fruit of our labour. The simple statement of facts, in the things of grace experimentally known, made in the demonstration of the Spirit, have been a

powerful means in the work of revival, though among the "weak things" that God has seen fit to employ. Relating experience with that warmth of heart which the Spirit gives to young converts in many cases is what is really needed more than some sermons described by an old eccentric preacher as being "as straight and well laid out as a corpse, and as cold and dead."

We visited Sawpits, Norwalk, Stamford, Bridgeport, Stratford, and Derby, and held meetings or exercised in meetings in each place; also in Tuckahoe and New-Rochelle our testimony was borne in favour of vital religion.

On this visit I became acquainted with Yankee inquisitiveness as well as with Yankee hospitality. I was introduced as a "converted infidel" to a middle-aged lady of some intelligence and not a little loquacity, who immediately exclaimed, "A converted infidel!" Rising from her seat and adjusting her gold spectacles, she continued, "Then, sir, you are a converted infidel, are you? What is your age?" I told her. "What is your employment? Are you married? Is your wife large, or small, like yourself? Where were you born? I am sure it must have been a place not favoured with much light, or you could not have been an infidel!" She was a single as well as singular lady, and there was not much danger of

her becoming the wife of an infidel from all appearance.

From the first day that I started from home, I had resolved to pray for the conversion of my wife a number of times each day. The two weeks having nearly expired, we proceeded on our way homeward without any openings of Providence appearing to me for suitable secular employment. Then temptations beset me that I had, in going with my friend to Connecticut, relied on my own imaginary impressions, instead of being led by the Spirit of truth and the indications of Providence. How different were my feelings now from what they had been, when, nearly two weeks before, I had travelled along the bank that overlooks Long Island Sound. O, then my mind and heart ran over with delight, on that clear day of breeze and sunshine, from the rapturous beauty of the scene. The blue bended sky, and the far off "glad waters of the dark blue" Sound, had afforded me a heavenly poetry of soul; but now I was sad, fearing I had chosen my own way instead of the Lord's.

On our arrival in the city of New-York, my friend and I were somehow or other separated, each thinking the other had gone home. I had not one cent in my pocket, and it was Saturday afternoon. This made the utility of my trip

appear still more doubtful. Praying for direction as I walked along the street, I suddenly met a Newark acquaintance, who was desirous of some conversation on the subject of religion with me, as he said. The needed sum was borrowed of him, and we took passage in the steamboat for Newark. On my way I had a special opportunity of helping inquiring minds to the knowledge of the truth, in a saving sense. Had I not been left in New-York, this rare opportunity would not have been afforded me. When I arrived at home I found that God had cared for my family. Some little money that had been some time due to me had been paid to my wife, by which her wants had been supplied. God had converted her soul during my absence, and that was a signal mark of the divine approbation; and a suitable employment God in his goodness had provided for me, in the form of letter-carrying. The post-master, the very day before I came home, had sent a person to see me, in order to engage me in this business. In this business I could see adaptedness to my health, immediate support, and being a "living epistle," bearing words of life "to be read of all men," to whom letter-carrying would lead me.

Fraudulent means have never, by Divine Providence, been allowed to be of advantage to those

who use them. This truth was instilled into my mind by my parents, who always acted before their children on principles of the strictest honesty, and from which I have never in my life in the least deviated. I owed some debts when I was converted, which troubled me. Before I would have cheated a mortal out of his just dues, I would have been willing to drain my blood from my veins, even while an infidel. I owed a grocer a debt, and he called on me to have it settled. I had no money. He spoke of selling my furniture. I told him I should take no measures to hinder him, as the debt was just; and if my property failed to bring the amount of money due him, I would pay him the balance when I could. In reply to his remark, that a person had volunteered to pay it for me and wait for *his* pay, I refused, on the ground that the grocer, if any one, should be the loser by me, having been the one receiving the profit of my custom. He did not sue me, and in six months I had the money for him in my pocket. I then repaired to his store, at which I had also continued my trade as much as possible during the past six months, and found the grocer in. "Sir," said I, "you have been very obliging to me in waiting on me, and now please add the probable cost of selling my goods by law, if you had done it, and the interest on

the amount I owe you, and I will settle with you." He looked at me for a moment as though I was a strange being—because I acted merely on honest principles, as every man should act—and said: "No, sir; you shall not pay cost, nor interest, nor even the full amount of your bill." And he threw off a small trifle of it, and I paid him. God's providence has ever favoured such a course as I took, and the above specimen is given for the purpose of inducing others of the readers of this paragraph, who may be poor, to "go and do likewise," and be assured that all will come out right.

Another incident, in which I have thought I saw a mark of divine interposition in some small degree, I will give, to show that God does condescend to deal with humble men on earth. I owed a man a sum of money, which came due on a certain day specified, on which I was particularly anxious not to disappoint my friend. When the day arrived, notwithstanding all my care, I lacked twenty dollars to meet the amount I owed. This was rather strange to me, as I thought I had done my best. On the morning of that day I rose early and meditated on the matter. Some might think twenty dollars a small matter to meditate upon; but I wished to see *where*, if at all, I had erred. True, I had

given away some money to the poor. I had not kept account of how much. Had I displeased God in this? Or why was Providence seemingly suffering me to feel the regret of a broken promise made to my neighbour? I took no breakfast, but went from home fasting, to see what God was about to unfold to me. In a secluded place I bowed to God in mighty prayer. Before I rose from my knees I was impressed with a strong assurance that the twenty dollars would be in my possession by the hour I needed it. I had not gone far before I was accosted by a man—a good Methodist—with these words: "My brother, just stop, I have something for you. I had a dream last night. In it I was told to let you have twenty dollars, the extra profit of my business last week." Saying which, he took from his pocket-book four five-dollar notes, and laid them down before me on a full sack that stood on the side-walk. I took the money and paid my debt, with an increased confidence in the providence of God, not regretting that I had given a few shillings to the poor.

One day, having business to transact with a person living in Broad-street, I was standing at his door knocking for admittance. I was not heard until I had used the "knocker" a number of times. During this short interval, an import-

ant particular, which demanded of me five dollars more than I then possessed, was brought to my mind with force. A sigh of regret escaped me, followed by an ejaculatory prayer for relief. Turning round I saw a man, an Englishman, and an apparent stranger, walking fast down the street toward me. He came directly up to me, and with his hand thrust something into my vest pocket, without saying a word. I felt in my pocket and found he had deposited a guinea, which was sufficient for my present need. He told me afterward that he had fallen heir to an estate in England, and as he had realized spiritual benefit from my conversation on the subject of religion with some of his friends, he wished to show me a token of kindness for it, and therefore gave me the gold.

Once, while helping in a protracted meeting in the Methodist Episcopal Church in Allen-street, New-York, I stayed at the house of brother N—— S——, now enjoying his rest in heaven. While at his house, I used great plainness of speech to all the unconverted members of the family, urging upon them the importance of being "born again," if they would be happy here and hereafter. The daughters were polished and polite, and the hospitality I enjoyed was unreserved and warm, flowing evidently from hearts of Christian kind-

ness. During the last night of my stay there, I was sorely buffeted by the enemy of my soul. I thought of the kindness with which I was treated, and the plainness and severity I had returned for it. True, I had meant it all for their good; but how could they know my meaning? I got up in the night and prayed for deliverance from temptation. In the morning, after breakfast, as I was about leaving, brother S——, taking me on one side, said, "Now, my dear brother, you have been faithful to those who are near and dear to me; remember that my house is your home whenever you will please to make it such. Here, take this," said he, handing me ten dollars, very much needed at the time, and adding, "Be faithful to God, brother, and he will always clear your way, and cause things to work together for good." Many times since I have thought that there is nothing good ever gained by going round the cross, or by endeavouring to "heal the hurt of the daughter of God's people slightly."

Having on a certain occasion prayed at the bedside of a sick woman who was failing fast with consumption, I looked around on the scanty apartment and asked her if she had anything to eat in the house. She pointed to a mug that stood upon the stand, and a few broken crackers by it, and, with a tear in her sunken eye, said,

"The Lord will provide." I took some small change from my pocket and laid it on the stand, and departed. Just as I was stepping into the street, I was tempted to think of my own need. I prayed that the Lord would remove the temptation, as I had reason to believe that it was not a bad spirit that had led me to leave some of God's money with the poor woman who so much needed it. I looked out, and there before me stood a person who handed me a bill, of considerable amount, to collect for him of a wealthy individual. I took the paper and in a few minutes had it cashed, and received for my service four dollars and fifty cents. Now all this transpired in just such a manner, at such a time, and under such circumstances, as most convincingly showed me that Providence will bring to pass, in experimental reality, the Bible truth, "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord."

On one Saturday evening, cold and windy, I thought of an afflicted family living in Halsey-street. Aaron was the husband's name,—the same Aaron referred to in the fifth chapter,—and father of that family. He was now sick, and poor, and destitute; and, dreary as the weather was, I was determined to visit him. I found him up stairs in his little room, with the family gathered all around the stove, which had in it nearly

the last of his fuel. He and his companion were both pious, and yet they were subjects of adversity and sorrow. After some conversation on the dearest of all subjects to the Christian's heart, I prayed with them; while in the exercise of which, I was strangely impressed that they were in peculiar need. At the close of prayer, as I was about retiring, I inquired of them if they had any bread in the house? I was answered in the negative. I gave them a shilling to buy a loaf. I was thanked. "Have you any meat or butter?" I continued. "We can do without such luxuries," said the emaciated man. I gave two shillings more, besides the tears, which were not counted. I then told them to believe and take courage, and they should never long want any good thing. As I left I thought I felt as though I had not lost any of my religion by my visit to the afflicted. On the Monday ensuing, I think, as I was walking along the street, a person from the South, who had seen me before, came close along side of me and dropped a sum of money into my pocket, saying I must take it as a token of his feelings for me. This was the same individual referred to in the eighth chapter as bearing his testimony in favour of religion, after I had spoken.

In long years after the period above referred

to, as I was walking alone through a street rather new, I heard my name called. I turned around, and Aaron, the afflicted man above described, desired me to come into his house. While seated on the sofa he and his wife awakened my mind afresh to the by-gone days of their affliction. They informed me that on the very night I had prayed with them and encouraged them by the promises of God, they had resolved to trust God fully and take courage, and had prospered in temporal concerns ever since; that they owned the nice place they then occupied, and had often, with thankfulness and weeping, spoken together on the goodness of the Lord in providing for them. But Aaron has now the "saints' rest" in a far superior mansion on high.

The business of letter-carrying gave me good opportunity of gaining experimental knowledge of the ways of God, and also the ways of man. I was brought into contact with all classes of character, and all grades of society and peculiarities of nature. The cellar, the garret, the poor-house, and the prison, I chose to visit, with a desire to profit and be, at the same time, profited. I was as happy while praying with the criminal in his cell as I was with the *élite*, kneeling on Brussels carpet; in the poor-house, as when surrounded with the glitter of earthly magnificence.

Jesus gave me an introduction to all classes, and "privately to those of reputation." In visiting the poorer classes I found more wretchedness than I had before thought existed in this land of plenty. How abject and distressed have I seen them in the winter season, shivering with cold and haggard from hunger and sickness, without fuel or food! Families of small children half-clad, pale, and sickly, huddled together with decrepit age, during the fall and winter of 1837, have left on my weeping memory sketches never to be effaced. How I pitied poor little children in gloomy cellars, with small cups of blue milk, and each a potato for their daily rations. And such scenes of wretchedness were often traced to intemperance. I took pleasure in searching out instances of suffering, and of giving information to those who had the means of relief and the disposition to apply them. There were some in those trying times who had hearts to feel and hands to do.

No doubt the rightful Proprietor of the universe wills that money, like talents and gracious gifts, should be used in his providential dealings and the prosecution of his gracious purposes, in reference to human salvation and redemption. The ritual sacrifices under the Mosaic dispensation were expensive. The Temple, by divine direction, was made to cost an immense sum. God's gold

and silver were made to be used for his glory; and if wealth be devoted to any other use, it is made by its possessor to eat hereafter as doth a canker. Such gold and silver in "rust" will be a "witness" against improper users, and will "eat their flesh as it were fire." The poor have ever been among us, affording good opportunities for exercising in the use of money according to the will of God. How thankful should rich men be that the poor are among them—not because they can, as they often do, oppress them in withholding from them the due wages of their hire—but that they may practise upon them the heavenly principles of charity and benevolence. O, when the religion of Jesus becomes so intense in the heart that the will of God will continually be sought with anxious desire to abide by it, then will this powerful principle of gospel benevolence go out in acts of kindness in the life to one another, and especially to the poor—then will his kingdom, which is not of this world, be more than a match for the forces arrayed against it. When avarice, and covetousness, and selfishness shall be *burned out* of the Church by holy fire from heaven; when the carnal mind in it shall be palsied by the shock of divine power, which is coming, and shall quivering die and go to its own place, then shall the power of Christianity be rapid in

its swell, and spread until, in circles of sheeted flame, it rolls from the equator's fiery girdle to the frozen poles. It has long been hindered in its wonted "goings-forth" by the miserly grasp of man on God's gold and silver; but it will not always be so. I know it is a truth, as often alleged, that many of the poor are not the followers of Christ; and that their poverty is, to a degree, the fruit of the service they render to Satan. But what then? Are the true children of God relieved from the performance of *their* duty in reference to them? Does not God send his rain upon the unjust as well as the just? And did not Christ die for the ungodly? Must we not look for some features of resemblance in the Christian character—the children of God—to the likeness of the heavenly Father and the elder Brother? Will theory save us, when it is "practice that makes perfect?"

We need a clear view to be taken of our own perfect weakness, that we may come down to that state of humility demanded, in order properly to estimate our lives in this world by the real benefit they may be to others; and he who does not desire life more from the good that that life imparts in its influence on those around, is not yet filling up that niche of gracious preparation so essential to his entrance into the kingdom of

heaven. This world, with our own perverse natures, and Satan, forms a dreadful triumvirate, combined against the Christian pilgrim in his upward course. The state of things in the present life forms a test of integrity to God, and affords a field for the activity and display of heavenly virtues. It is, therefore, better than if we had no such test to try us, and no such opposing forces, by which, in resisting, we make exertions that develop the Christian heart and mind. But this combined foe must be overcome by following the glorious "Conqueror" on the "white horse." The heights of Zion are to be finally gained by obediently marching under the blood-stained banner of Immanuel; warring with him a continual warfare against his enemy; stemming counter currents, and facing driving storms, until the spirit, leaving the body, shines in the first flash of celestial day. Sinai, Calvary, and Tabor are three typical mountain stepping-stones on the way to the New Jerusalem: fire, blood, and then "the glory that should follow;" the law, grace, and then the Truth—the "end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." And in all these things of revelation and grace, providence is illustrated; and likewise providence in return illustrates the truths of redemption.

The danger of riches is great; yet how often

*preferred* to the more safe condition. The hand of God's providential dealings is worth seeing. This hand was not separated and hidden from me by a *thick wall* of wealth. I looked to God for temporal blessings, without the temptation to lean upon my possessions. The looking by faith was to me of more value than the temporal supply that came. The *manner* of providing for me was more needed to give instruction in the things of God for heavenly use, than the temporal provision received was for temporal convenience.

# CHAPTER X.

## EVIDENCES OF BIBLE TRUTH TESTED.

His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.—BIBLE.

TRUTH is an uncreated, eternal, and unchangeable law of mental and moral operation, and is not dependent on any borrowed light for its revealings to the human mind. It is consistent with itself throughout all the range of being. In science, morals, and religion, truth manifests itself in its own illustrations, to minds prepared to receive it, as peculiarly distinguished in its aspects from all forms of error and falsehood as light is from darkness.

The love of divine truth, and an ardent desire after the knowledge of it, indicate a work of grace on the heart. This form of truth is godly sincerity, and is a stream from the great Fountain. The Spirit of Truth is the Holy Spirit of God: in this form truth is *alive* and *active*. From such life and activity has proceeded all the inspiration that has furnished us with the Holy Scriptures, and that imparts to the hearts of believers the love of truth connected with salvation.

This love of truth led Paul to the Fountain of its inspiration, where was revealed to him the gospel principles which were to go forth, with suitable means and instrumentalities, to the ultimate accomplishment of the far-reaching purposes of human redemption. It was the ardent love of truth that cheered the heart of banished John, while on lonely Patmos, and prepared him to be the selected repository of sublime revelations from the opened "everlasting doors" of the heavenly world.

The truth of God's existence, attributes, and will is not to be discovered from the nature of things around us, as some erroneously affirm; but is revealed in the divine word by the Holy Spirit, that inspired the sacred penmen to write it, and now opens the understanding of the believer to receive it. The exact workings of the many parts in the "stupendous whole" of nature, as may be viewed by the eye of science, are not intended by the Creator to afford us a revelation of himself; for if this had been the case, they would have been sufficient, and the Bible and the Holy Ghost would not have been needed nor given. That nature in its manifold machinery and laws evinces marks of contrivance and design, as the work and operation of an all-wise Intelligence, is true; but such marks are no

proof of the being and character of God to the animal creation, and reason unaided would not see God revealed in material things. The "eternal power and Godhead" we are impressed with by the Spirit of God within, giving capacity for spiritual exercises. The visible works of God, to those in communion with him by his Spirit, help to illustrate saving truth; but it does not honour God for us to trust more in things seen than in "things not seen." Things seen are incapable of supporting faith; for believing them is a thing that cannot be avoided, and does not involve, therefore, any suitable tests of spiritual integrity. God requires us to believe the words that he has spoken, and the dictates of his Spirit within us, in order to be acquainted with saving truth.

Let, then, the diversities and varieties in endless fractional differences from sameness, show themselves in all the moving masses of matter around us. Let the sun, himself, be unequal in his motion round the centre of gravity*—a regular

* The sun, while he moves round on his own axis, moves also in an orbit smaller than his own periphery round the centre of gravity of the entire mass of matter of the solar system. This centre is not always in one point, because of the variableness at different times of planetary attractions. Such *apparent* want of order is not to be overlooked, although it argues nothing against revelation, but for it.

gradation *not* appear in the sizes of the planets—the earth have an overplus of hours, minutes, and seconds, from want of exactness in annual revolution with the precession of the equinoxes—the comets, also, proving that the power of motion with them is not all the while operating at right angles with the line of attraction in their eccentric orbits;—is not the universe, for all this, as good in showing the "handiwork" of God, as if it were, as man often declares it to be—so much like the works of man, in *comprehended symmetry?*

And what are the laws of nature, as they are called, but the modes in which God chooses to operate with his power in carrying on the rapid and continued movements of material worlds, with all their appurtenances of life and animation in his support, regulation, and government of the universe? Between the material works of God and his revelation to man, there is a resemblance. In both there is a dissimilarity from all human productions. The Scriptures are found to be lacking in the same kind of symmetry that the rest of the works of God are, according to man's taste and rules of measurement. The law, gospel, precepts, doctrines, and promises, are found through all the pages of the Bible, without any visible marks of concert or concentration flowing from a premeditated plan of arrangement. Jesus

Christ and Christ crucified, it is true, is the central lamp that lights up the whole scene of human redemption. Through this apparent diversity and variety, man, in all the variety of his conditions, aspects, circumstances, and capacities, finds ample provisions for all his wants. Thus the saving expedient which God, in love, has devised for the salvation of sinners, he has secured by bars, stronger than adamant, against its enemies; and even the objections brought against its truth by infidels, he turns into arguments in favour of the divinity of its claims.

When divine truth is experienced in its saving power, everything in nature illustrates its beauty. Even the inconsistencies of error prove the absence of truth as the cause; and as opposites illustrate each other, so is truth in its identity made more palpable by the absurdity of its opposites—error and falsehood.

On a certain occasion, shortly after my conversion, I was requested by some of my old associates, whom I met on a steamboat, to join them in a free conversation on the subject of our differences of opinion. While seated together in a semicircle, M. A——, who held that the Christian religion could not be true, because of the inconsistency of its subjects, wished me to *ask* and *answer* questions with him, alternately. And it

was agreed, before the company, that we should treat each other on the presumption that we believed each other to be candid in our questions and answers, and thus each act consistently. I was requested to propound the first question; and I proceeded: "Mr. A——, if the Christian religion is true, do you believe *I* enjoy it?" "Certainly," said he; "if such a religion has an existence, as some say it has, I believe you possess it." "Now," said I, "it is your turn to question me." He replied, "I would be as well suited if you would do all the questioning—I can answer!" I then inquired, "If this religion be true, do *you* wish to possess it?" "Of course I do," was his reply. I then turned round to the company, and said: "Gentlemen, you have been witnesses to the agreement between Mr. A—— and myself, to presume on the sincerity of each other's replies to questions; and also, you recollect, Mr. A—— dislikes very much anything like inconsistency. He has made confession in his answers to my questions, before you all, that if religion be true, he believes *I* enjoy it, and he wishes, on the same condition, to have it himself. Now, in this he has declared that I have ability, in his estimation, to instruct him in that which he desires to attain. Consistency demands, then, of both of us, that we kneel down here, in the cabin, and that I

pray for Mr. ——, and he comply with my instructions." As I was making preparations to kneel, Mr. A—— got up in ill-humour, not willing to be consistent with his profession. I left him, the butt of the ridicule of his own party, with the advice, that truth, whenever he would in humility and prayer determine to abide by it, would make him *a consistent man.*

The truth of excellence in Christianity is illustrated in that purity looked for in the Christian character, by all men, as essential to it, and the general disappointment expressed when that purity does not appear in the character of Christian professors. This is a law of our present constitution, to expect good to flow from Christianity, and we can have no abiding impression that principles of opposition to this gracious scheme will be attended with real good to those who may cherish them.

A deistical associate of mine in former days, of some note in the political world, and a tavern-keeper, expressed great sorrow for me for being so weak as to become a converted man and a Methodist. He sought an interview with me in order to *strengthen* my mind against Jesus Christ and his religion. After some unavailing labour on this point he said: "It is quite likely you will persist in thinking that you are right, and that I

am wrong. Well, I always thought that you were weak-minded. Your brother David is much your superior, I tell you." (At this time my brother was also an infidel.) "I do not claim to be strong in intellectual powers," I replied, "and for my infidel brother being my superior, it has nothing to do with the question of the truth of religion."

Sometime afterward my brother was converted, and his infidelity fared as mine had done. I had not told him how high he stood in the estimation of the tavern-keeper, and it struck me that the *superiority* of his mind might now be a benefit to him, so we together paid "mine host" a visit. We found him in the *bar-room*, (what a *bar* to religion!) and were politely invited to be seated. In conversation the time was occupied by the tavern-keeper and my brother, and the subject of it was, of course, the religion of the Bible. This being defended by my brother, he was strongly *suspected* of being a converted man. At length they both rose and were about to separate, when my brother said, "Well, sir, you will not take the evidence the Bible affords nor my testimony of the truth of religion; still, let me ask you, Do you not believe that goodness of influence and the guidance of divine truth go together?"

"I do, indeed," was the reply.

"Very well," resumed my brother: "suppose now an infidel and a Christian should both come to this bar and drink of your liquor to drunkenness, would they be affected *alike* by such conduct? Would such a course make the Christian *less* a Christian than he was before?"

"I think it would," was the tavern-keeper's honest reply.

"But," continued my brother, "would the infidel become *less* an infidel by getting drunk?"

"Well—really—I—suppose not," confessed the confused man.

"Now," said my brother, "out of your own mouth it is here declared that Christianity is *too good* to harmonize with the evil of drunkenness, and that infidelity is *so bad* that its qualities are not made worse by intemperance and crime; and yet *you* persist in occupying the wrong side of the question!"

I then stepped up to our landlord and whispered loudly in his ear, "You know, sir, you told me, some time ago, that my brother's mind was far superior to mine; therefore I kept still. How do you like his mind now, sir? Is it strong enough?" He turned around, looking at his decanters, and we left.

Revealed religion, like all truth, is consistent with itself from all its premises to its conclusions;

but inconsistency is an inseparable characteristic of all scepticism in regard to its truths. Scepticism is a tissue of untenable doubts and conjectures, supported by ignorance, pride, and natural depravity.

Having some business to transact at a public-house on a certain day, I met there a young man of pedantic deportment, who did not fail to exhibit his smattering of Latin and Greek, and his sceptical pretensions. He was boisterous in his declarations of his strong doubts and solid objections in regard to Bible truths. To my entreaties that he would seek an acquaintance with Christ and his religion, he replied, "You are an ignorant man. Priestcraft has made of you a deluded dupe; and thousands like you are led away by fanaticism. I tell you, sir, there is no truth in what you call Christ's religion; and more than that, there never was such a person as Jesus Christ."

The people, to a dozen or more, gathered around us, staring, with astonishment, at the learned young man, wondering, it might be, which was the more solid—his *doubts* or his *head*. While he stood before me, swelling with the pride of importance and the victory he had gained, I looked up and my eyes rested on an almanac which had, on the outside leaf, in large letters, "ANNO

DOMINI." The young man's desire to appear learned, it struck me, had much to do with his scepticism, and could be made the means by which, "out of his own mouth, to judge him." I, therefore, after conversing awhile on another part of the subject, turned to the old almanac, and, with an air of inquiry, said, "Why, I wonder, is *Anno Domini* printed on almanacs?"

The young man instantly seized upon the golden opportunity to show his great learning, and, with much self-conceit, exclaimed aloud, "Anno Domini is a Latin word, sir, and means *in the year of our Lord*."

"Will you, then, be so kind as to tell us, seeing you are a learned man, who was *our Lord*, and how the words *Anno Domini* came to be used in denoting his year—the year of his birth—if there never was, as you say, such a person as our Lord?" I inquired. The young man looked around on countenances that spoke both pity and contempt for him, and said, "Gentlemen, I declare I did not think of that." How many in eternity, we have reason to believe, will say, with the young man, when they shall feel the conclusions of the premises they are now laying down, "O, I did not think of this!"

Christianity is exclusive in its claims. It is established by laws that operate in all consciences

of the human race. Its principles are interlaced in a spiritual network with the minds and hearts of all men, so that no man can free himself from its fears and its hopes. Salvation through Christ is the only system that, in an exclusive and peculiar manner, is so adapted to the states of mankind in all their variety as not to find a rival in any other system that could possibly be devised.

On a certain occasion, hearing a person use profane language in the company of a number of young men, I took him to do for the wickedness and pernicious influence of his conduct. He replied, "I am an infidel by profession, as you are by profession a Christian. Swearing is my *privilege*, as much as praying is yours, if justice had the sway. You may pray as much as you please, and I will swear as much as I please; for I am as sincere in my infidelity as you are in your religion." I then replied, "Sir, I take the liberty to express to you my doubts about your sincerity in infidelity being like the sincerity of the Christian; and I challenge you to the test of showing it." He replied, "I will meet you on the ground of any test you please." "Then," said I, "let our opposing sentiments, for the sake of testing, be called *creeds*. My creed I will represent by the atoning blood of Christ, for it is

the central idea of all saving truth. Yours may be represented by the rejection of all interest in the atonement. Now, can you be as sincere in the rejection of my creed as I can be in the rejection of yours?" He replied, "I think I can; go ahead!" "Then, before this company, I avow my determination to trample upon and spurn your creed until my latest breath, so help me God!" I remarked. "And now, dare you in the same deliberate manner, to show your sincerity in the choice you have made, treat my creed as I have done yours? Dare you avow that you intend during life to trample on the blood of the only Redeemer, as I have vowed to trample on your infidelity, to show my sincerity in the safety of the choice I have made?" After a pause, with the remains of a blush lingering upon his countenance, he made this reluctant reply: "I will do no such thing."

Christianity cannot possibly have a stronger argument in its favour than its true definition. A very striking difference between Christians and infidels is, the fact that Christians have an experimental knowledge of the subject of religion, and of the same subject infidels are ignorant. Christian knowledge and infidel ignorance separate the two opposite parties from one another, as widely as the impassable gulf.

An infidel of some little acquirements invited me to call and converse with him on the subject of Bible religion, which he promised to prove to me was nothing but a fable. While walking on my way to visit him, I meditated on the subject thus: "If my antagonist has not the right kind of knowledge, and to a sufficient degree to define Bible religion accurately, then he does not know enough to keep up an intelligent conversation on the subject; and if he does possess the right sort of knowledge to a sufficient degree to rightly define it, then controversy will not be needed at all." When I arrived, I found the infidel all "cut and dried," in his own opinion, for debate, and fully competent, like every other infidel, to prove Bible religion altogether a fable. I stated to him my sorrow that the cause I was about to endeavour to defend had not an abler advocate—that I was but a young convert, and my side of the question would not be fairly represented. He acknowledged me to be capable of truly representing the case. "But," said I, "would you be willing to hold a controversy with me if you knew I lacked ability to define accurately the position of both sides of the question—the affirmative and the negative? "No, indeed," he replied, "I would not be willing to waste time and words in controversy with a person who

could not tell what he was endeavouring to support, nor what he was essaying to oppose." "Very well, then," I remarked; "that is a good rule, and I wish to profit by it in getting it to work both ways. Now, sir, I wish, before we advance any further, for you to define Bible religion, by separating it from everything irrelevant, so that nothing shall appear connected with it but what essentially belongs to it. And then, in your attack upon it, you will attempt to assail nothing but what is claimed by its Founder and its possessors to be *of* it; and I will have nothing to defend but what belongs to Christ." "Define it, sir!" said he; "do you want *me* to define it? Why, you believe it to be truth, and I believe it, with equal evidence, to be a fable." "Then please," I continued, "to define the fable. Show the position it occupies, how it originated, what are its properties and parts, and how it is that you come to know more about this *fable* than those who profess, with plausibility, to experience its power and practise its precepts." He showed signs of embarrassment.

I could not prevail on him to define the fable; and I remarked, before leaving him, "That a man to know sufficiently the religion of the Bible to define it, and still not to embrace it, he must be a *knave;* and a man to be too ignorant to

define it, and yet to have a disposition to oppose it, he must be a *fool.* Infidelity is, therefore, a compound of knavery and folly. Christianity is a system opposed to it, and, therefore, is a glorious compound of truth and wisdom—the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

The fallacy of every argument, and the futility of every objection against the Christian religion, illustrates the divinity of its truth. As the pleasantness of light appears to better advantage when contrasted with the horrors of darkness, so does religion show the truth of its high claim when it is contrasted with the bad qualities of every opposition brought against it.

On one pleasant moonlight evening, while walking from a place of public-worship, I was overtaken by a tall infidel, who gave evident signs that he wished to make a display of himself in a controversy with me on the subject of that evening's sermon. He commenced an attack upon me by saying, "I do not believe the arguments I heard to-night, in support of what is called religion. I am, sir, what you denominate an infidel." "Indeed," I replied, "I am sorry to hear that. You are to be pitied, I assure you." "I do not wish to be pitied at all," said he. "Well, what *do* you believe religion to be then, since you so dislike the arguments you have been

listening to?" I inquired. He summed up the entire amount of his dignity, and said, in a decided tone: "It is an empty nothing, sir—a mere shadow;" and swelled with an extreme inflation of importance. "You have not been long in possession of this vast secret of the shadowy emptiness and nothingness of Christianity," I replied, "have you?" "O yes, I have been an infidel for eight years." "I am sorry to hear it has been so long, for I would fain hope that you would learn better in future than to be an infidel," I continued. "But perhaps you have not offered active resistance to the Christian religion all the eight years past of your infidelity, have you?" "Indeed," said he, "I have resisted it all that time, and mean to continue opposing it with all my might!" "What, a 'nothing' and a 'shadow' to be resisted! and you declare that you have done it," I remarked, "and mean still to continue fighting a shadow with your might, as you have done for eight years! Truly you must be a wonderful man, capable of such things!" The long man, thus cut short, appeared almost too slim on that moonlight evening to make a shadow, notwithstanding his wonderful exploit confessed, of fighting with one for eight years.

The religion of our Lord Jesus Christ, unlike

every other religion, rests upon facts, and principles, and power, such as carry evidence all-convincing to the mind and heart of every true believer. Like the sun in the firmament, its own light is its true revelation. Mathematical demonstrations to the man of science are not more convincing than are to the experimental Christian the moral certainties of the gospel system, impressed on the heart by the Holy Ghost.

A person—a magistrate of acknowledged abilities, and a gentleman in manners—once invited me to his house, his wife being a Methodist. He said he wished to converse with me on religion. The "'squire," as he was styled, was an influential sceptic; and although a moral man, and strictly temperate, yet many were influenced in a course of infidelity by him. I was warned by unbelievers to be very cautious how I entered into controversy with him, for he was a *powerful man* in argument. Being with this sceptic in his own house, he soon declared to me his great willingness to be under the power of conviction, at all times and on all subjects, to the truth. I then inquired of him why he did not believe the truth that supports the Christian religion? He replied: "Sir, I always love truth, and have *enjoyed* many conversations with ministers of the gospel; but I am not a credulous man. Christianity, although I

respect many of its votaries, would tax my credulity too much for my reason or common-sense." "Then, really," I replied, "does the 'squire think that all the Christian world are destitute of reason and common-sense? Does he believe that the Crucified Man, Jesus Christ, was never raised from the dead?" "Why, sir," said he, "Christians may have reason and sense on other subjects, but on religion they are led by blind enthusiasm; and as to Christ being raised from the dead, I never have yet been credulous enough to believe it." "Then let me tell you, sir," I remarked, "that I never in my life knew a more credulous man among Christians than *you* are. You, to be consistent, must admit that you believe that a certain lie—unlike all other lies—has been spoken and taken for *truth*, under the most astonishing circumstances, for thousands of years, —by prophecies, types, and miracles,—preparing the minds of the learned and the good for an event that was to take place in the time predicted. That event was the resurrection of Christ. This great lie, under such awful circumstances, you are forced to believe, produced more wonderful effects, on the millions looking for it, than all the facts of science combined. That about fifty days after this *conjectured-actual-reality* had taken place, three thousand in one day, by the direct

influence of the alleged fact upon them—although, as you believe, *a lie*—met with such a change as in its effects to agitate the most enlightened portions of the then known world, and to be matter of history through every age since. That the Church of Jesus Christ, by power connected with it, has been preserved, strengthened, and increased. That thousands and millions of bright monuments of intellect, and the best moral characters in all ages, have declared their indebtedness to this *lie* for all their excellence. That infidelity, in every age, with all its labour and skill, has not been able to put down this *lie*, unarmed as it is with sword of steel or secular power. And that the force of this lie is more powerful, in the present day, *to do good* among men, than *any truth* in the vast volume of nature. That, by believing it to be true, men of every grade of wickedness are brought under renovating power, and are manifestly reformed. And your own excellent wife, in the purity of her heart, testifies of its most salutary effects in the comfort it gives her. All this you are bound, by the position you have assumed, to believe. And more than this, that also these great and good men and women, who testify to the resurrection of Jesus, and its power upon them, do not know as much of themselves as you do of them. *You* not a credulous

man! To believe that you are *not* a credulous man is indeed the very climax of credulity." The 'squire was evidently confused, as he turned round in his chair, and said, "Well, for my part, I am willing that every one should enjoy his own opinions."

The things in divine revelation most important in their connexion with human salvation, are generally within the reach of the testing power of experience: an experiment may be made to know them.

I called once to see and converse with an ingenious mechanic, who has since become quite noted for useful patented inventions, and who was then a sceptic. I said to him: "William, you are an ingenious person, and fond of making experiments in chemistry and other branches of science; now, will you not be willing to make one experiment in reference to that religion you deem a fable? If it should be true, of course you should wish to know it; if it is but a fable, you cannot be injured by the experiment, as it will be attended with no great sacrifice nor expense." He replied, "What do you wish me to do, in order to make an experiment upon such a mysterious subject?" "I wish you to go into your closet every evening of the present week, commencing with this, (Monday,) and kneel down and repeat

on your knees the Lord's prayer; and I will call again and see you on Saturday night." He replied, "I think I will;" and I left him. On Saturday evening, I found him sitting bent forward, with his face resting upon his hand, in a thoughtful mood. "Well, William, have you made the experiment agreed upon?" He replied, after a sigh and a pause, "I have; and I am at a loss to account for the operation of my own mind. On Monday evening, about sunset, I ascended the steps leading to my bedroom, and kneeled with no kind of seriousness; I recited the prayer, and laughed at myself. On Tuesday evening, while going to my retirement, I was affected in a more serious manner; my frame trembled, and I felt a weakness in my knees. On Wednesday evening, while on my knees, the power of speech seemed to be withdrawn. On Thursday evening, and that of Friday, I had to drag myself to the place where I promised you I would repeat the Lord's prayer. This evening I was longer on my knees than on the former evenings; and now I give it as my deliberate conviction that *man* never originated that form of prayer. I believe it is from God, and that the Bible contains a divine religion. What I may be hereafter I know not. My peace is now disturbed, and I would like to be right."

I gave him the best advice in my power. His infidelity, from this experiment, received a blow from which it never recovered. Two years afterward he received justifying faith, and joined the Methodist Episcopal Church, of which he continues a member until the present time.

## CHAPTER XI.

### INCIDENTS AND REFLECTIONS.

O, gentlemen, the time of life is short!
To spend that shortness basely, were too long,
If life did ride upon a dial's point,
Still ending at the arrival of an hour.—SHAKSPEARE.

THE finite and the infinite must forever be separated from each other by a necessary and immeasurable distance. With God there can be no accident, chance, nor contingency, because he is infinite in all his attributes; with man there is chance, with accidents and contingencies, because of his limited comprehension. With God nothing happens or takes place without intelligent causes and agencies; with man the effects of such agencies may appear, and often do, but they are not always traced to their causes. All things that are really good in character are brought about by divine agency; all evils, by agencies and instrumentalities evil and infernal, and suffered by the Supreme to come to pass. Severities and judgments have been often endured by persons who looked upon them as unavoidable, when their own conduct was the

cause, meriting severe discipline; and it is possible that perhaps not one in ten of all those who die at mature age, but might live longer, were the laws of life, in their persons, and the law of God, especially, more carefully obeyed by them. Nothing is more absurd than what is heard so often from the lips of good persons, when one dies: "It was to be so." From proper considerations on this subject, how much is man the maker of his own destiny.

Too much care cannot be taken by parents to have pure truth instilled into the minds of their children. When I was quite a child, a near neighbour met with an accident, from the effects of which he died. It was in warm weather, and before he was buried he turned black. A stranger met me shortly after his death, on the road near the graveyard where he was buried. He accosted me with, "My child, do you know whose grave that newly made one is?" I told him I did. He proceeded: "Did you see him after he was dead?" I answered in the affirmative. "Did he turn black after he died?" "Yes, sir," I replied. "Then he has certainly gone to hell—that is a sure sign."

It was some time before this superstitious notion was eradicated from my mind. I thought of the remark of the stranger every time I heard

of a death in the neighbourhood. Thus, also, I never knew a strong predestinarian, who had become such by conversion to God, but who had Calvinism instilled into his mind while a child. An elegant writer has therefore truly said, that "Childhood is like a mirror, catching and reflecting images from all around it. Remember, that an impious or profane thought, uttered by a parent's lip, may operate upon the young heart like a careless spray of water thrown upon polished steel, staining it with rust which no after scouring can efface."

One day when but a child at school, taught by my father, during the noon recess, to test my dexterity, I endeavoured to throw a stone, for me quite heavy, over a large tree of spreading boughs. The stone, in falling on the opposite side, struck a woman on the head, stunning her with the blow. Complaint was entered against the unknown offender to my father. I soon found that I was not suspected, and could have eluded discovery while others were blamed. I went forward and cleared the suspected ones by confessing my fault. I said, "I would rather be punished myself than see the blame resting on one who is innocent." This so pleased my father that I had loved honesty and truth even at the sacrifice of exposure to punishment, that he would not chastise me, but often

after spoke of my love of truth. Now I believe this little incident had such a salutary effect upon my whole life, that I am much indebted to my father's high estimate, timely expressed, of this moral quality, for what of it I have possessed.

A young man, a clerk, well known to me, who was fond of novel reading and theatrical amusements, was found guilty, at a certain time, of abstracting money from the drawer of his wealthy employer in a dishonest manner. This act in the young man produced great astonishment among his acquaintances, by whom he was highly esteemed. In searching his person a slip of paper was found on him, with this pernicious sentiment written on it, in his own hand: "He that being robbed, not wanting what is stolen, let him not know it, and he is not robbed at all." This dramatic sentiment had been cherished by him till his heart was prepared to reduce it to practice. "Can a man take live coals into his bosom and his clothes not be burned?"

When I was but a child of four or five years, being with my father at a neighbouring farmer's house, about a mile from home, in playing about the door-yard, I took up a small hammer to play with, thinking, I suppose, that I had found it. When on our way, to within a few hundred yards from home, my father discovered the neigh-

bour's hammer in my hand. He turned, and said to me: "Now, my son, you have done very wrong in taking Mr. H——'s hammer. Come back again with me immediately, and return that property, you have taken without liberty, to its owner." He walked with me all the way back, and made me apologize to the neighbour for taking his hammer. The neighbour thought my father took too much pains about so small a matter; but how much benefit this "little matter" has brought to me, throughout my whole life, is known only to God. My father, also, repeatedly told me that gambling was a species of dishonesty, and for that reason, mainly, I have never practised it in my life.

The most important period to commence forming the moral character is in pliable and tender youth, before the disposition becomes rigid and set. The heart is depraved, and it is natural for it to form an evil bias early.

I could now name five or six persons, who were young men with me, all apparently of much better constitutions—young men of vigorous intellects, of opportunities and acquirements, of respectable parentage—now filling drunkards' graves. Why? They cherished and gave way to mirthful amusements; they were fond of performing in theatrical exhibitions, which led to

dissipation; and by degrees they were led along to ruin, through the increase of the appetite, until they fell a prey to the destroyer. They were often told that this would be the fatal issue of their course, but they would not believe it.

"Great men are not always wise, neither do the aged always understand judgment." This was illustrated to me once, when I visited an old friend, an infidel, with an intention to do him good. I related to him my conversion, and desired him to seek religion. I told him I was much more contented than when I used to go with him to the meetings of the infidels. He flew into a passion at once and said, "You lie! you are not happy! You are the worst person in the place, going about making people discontented. Go out of my house, I say; I am happy enough." At this juncture his little daughter came up-stairs, saying, "Father, you are not contented, for you are complaining all the while." In leaving this man, I said, "Sir, in going away, I cannot take with me your reflections."

A rich but decrepit old man, tottering on the brink of the grave, was once in my hearing praising the present world. He said: "Some people are always speaking in low terms of the present world, calling it empty and vain, and that it is not worth living for; but I do not find it so.

I like it *better* than the world to come; for I have not seen that world, nor any one that has ever been there. Give me *this* world, and the next may go for what it will fetch; for my motto on this subject is, 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.'" I turned to the old and infirm gentleman, and said: 'I am sorry, sir, to hear you talk in such a manner. Your known capacity, position, and age, should give us a warrant of better things. You are an old man, and cannot, according to the course of nature, remain long in this world. You will soon be *forced* to let go your hold upon it." He replied, "I care not for your world to come! I say, give me the present, and I am satisfied." Now all that I could do, by way of truthful remark, could have no weight on the mind of that infirm old man. The transient nature of the things of time, and the probabilities of the near approach to eternity, were apparently beyond the reach of that mind, "blinded by the god of this world." In a few brief months that old, worldly, and unprepared man was numbered with the dead, and his spirit in eternity.

Who can compute the difference between such a life as the one above alluded to, and a short life of genuine piety to God? The most lengthened life, encircled by the brightest visions of the

present world, without religion, will not compare with a life devoted to God, though of short duration on earth. Such a life is destined to reap a harvest in excellence, far transcending all created things. Yea, let this poor life be filled with temptation, adversity, sorrow, and sickness—short life of faith, of tears, of suffering—is it not rich in every ennobling quality, cultivated during the appropriate season of the "early and the latter rain," for the soul's eternal use?

I sat down once beside a man of intemperate habits, beneath an elm-tree, in order to endeavour to prevail on him to break off from the thraldom of rum, and by radical reformation become a man. He was not under the influence of liquor at the time, and he wept, while hope in him appeared struggling with despair. His despondency seemed to come most from the fact that his character was gone, and there was a general want of sympathy for him. Poor man! many like him have perished for the want of just that kind of sympathy which Christians are privileged to exercise.

A very short time after the above interview with the poor drunkard, I was walking near the same place, when suddenly I beheld the smoke, a short distance off, issuing rapidly from an old barn on fire. I hastened to the scene of confla-

gration, and among the falling timbers the burned remains of a human body fell down, with boots, hat, and clothes, in a state sufficient to afford a recognition of the *same man* I had conversed with under the elm-tree. It was supposed he had lain down in the hay in a drunken state, with a pipe in his mouth, or matches in his pocket.

That man was once respected. Had he even a thought, when just commencing his downward career, that his life would end as it did? And many now following a like course will end, doubtless, in a similar manner, who would feel highly insulted if their probable end should barely be suggested to them.

A person far advanced in the downward course of dissipation was once the subject of my anxious solicitude and prayers for a long time. At last he was, to all human appearance, converted. He lived in the apparent enjoyment of religion for about four months. While praying for him I was suddenly impressed—whether through supernatural agency or not, I cannot tell—with the gloomy thought that he had again fallen before the power of his former enemy. The next day I found that my apprehension concerning him was not ill-grounded. His old appetite had resumed its former strength, and he had yielded to its

direful sway. I expostulated with him, and prayed for him for a time, but all to no purpose. I dreamed a dream concerning him, after which I had no more anxiety to pray for him.

How many I have known struggling for a while with their convictions, then, amid the horrors of despair, sink into the grave unpardoned, and consequently unprepared. Such scenes occur every year, I know, all over our sin-stricken, yet gospel-visited land; but there is a general reluctance to take much notice of them, and thus their frequency is often increased by covering them up, and not allowing them to have that place of warning among us which God designs they should have.

One evening at a protracted-meeting, standing in the altar, I remarked, previous to engaging in prayer, "that I had the witness within, that Jesus Christ, who was once dead, was alive; that I knew this fact, that Jesus was alive, by certain effects produced that could have no existence were he not alive." As I made this remark, an infidel in the congregation replied, "That is a lie, for no man *can* know that!" An officer of the peace was about to remove him from the church for improper conduct, but I succeeded in getting consent to let him remain, stating that it was my belief that God would afford us *evidence*

of the life of his Son by the conversion of souls. That evening there were five souls converted! In two or three months after that night, the infidel died, in the most wretched state of mind, saying that the devil had come for him. I give this from good authority.

From the foregoing incidents should we not take warning, that we may not finally be found among the company of those who "forget God" in the present life? To serve God faithfully in spirit and in truth, is no trifle. Our chief delight must be in God, and the lessons that are to bring us to this desired point, are to be learned in the present life, or never. Without zeal and care in the pursuit of this delight in God, there must inevitably be a desolating waste of all that can possibly make life valuable. Should we not place a due estimate upon the understanding and the affections, as well as upon eating, breathing, and sleeping? We have powers of thought, and feelings, which *must* exist. Real living to man is more than the mere operations of animal vitality, with its organism, performing its involuntary functions; and it is more than the necessary movement of the immortal principle through the periods of measured duration. There is a field of ripe harvest beyond the bound of time, for every human individual, toward which he is now tending. This

ripe state will be where fruit will be reaped of seed sown while here—a state of "corruption" from sowing to "the flesh," or a state of "life-everlasting" from sowing to "the Spirit."

What then, in reality, is an unregenerate life worth? View it as lengthened out to its utmost, to even a hundred years. There it is, in *prospective.* Look at it. Like a flying railroad train, it will soon be *retrospective.* It is gone! The "abyss hath swallowed up its form." The posts along the route of sinful pleasures, worldly honours, and perishable riches, are passed. What signifies all the boasted length, strength, health, and accomplishments of such a life, when death has put a period to it? And what will be the probable results of such a life in the future world? Will not appetites of unregenerate nature remain the same after death? Will not the miser still desire his gold? And will not the drunkard and the glutton still wish to satiate their craving appetites, as they had done while on earth? And will not infamous wretches desire again their "vile bodies," which they had here prostituted to lust and abomination, in order to have repeated their wanton pleasures? And will not all these desires, to say the least, be forever ungratified?

The human powers of thought, in connexion with the principle of immortality within, give an

importance to man in the scale of existence, much overlooked in our hurry after trifles. From want of proper attention here, many have wandered over prairies of imagination set on fire by the enemy, until involved beyond recovery. Many a frail bark, in early life, has been launched upon an ocean of doubt and uncertainty, with all the evil propensities of human nature on board, with no acknowledged guide to point out unseen dangers, until it has finally foundered, and been lost amid the fury of warring winds and waves.

It was for the sole purpose of drawing out into *saving* activity the energies of the soul, that gospel truth was revealed. In this gospel we can see what laws God would be pleased to have regulate the thinking powers, by what in it is unfolded. In it three worlds are brought to view. A heaven of ministering and "desiring angels;" a hell of malicious and "ugly devils;" and the world of human beings, suspended between the two, with its checkered scenes of light and shade. Man in this earthly abode is not at home, but a pilgrim. From this abode he must soon "rise and depart, for this is not his rest." He must go either to heaven or to hell after his probation is ended. And this will be according to his conduct in choosing here what stamp of moral character he shall have upon him impress-

ed. To live, then, in view of such solemn considerations, without a desire for a right train of thought to be set agoing within us by revelation and divine grace, is as deliberate folly as one would be thought guilty of who should lie down on a magazine of gun-powder exposed to continually emitted sparks of fire. God has poured out upon man his own mind, and withheld from him no good thing, in order that he might have thought purified at the fountain, and feelings that would be a continual feast. But how is the stream of holy inspiration avoided, and "broken cisterns that will hold no water" sought! God is good, but man is ungrateful.

Suppose a company of men and women to go on a voyage. Bidding adieu to friends, they soon, leaving the view of the receding shores, are far away from home. In a distant sea an island is descried. Without liberty from the captain the company leave the ship and go to the island. This island they find not to agree with their anticipations, but infested with loathsome vermin, reptiles, and wild beasts, and affording them no supply of wholesome food, nor shelter from the stormy blast. And here, after living in sickness, suffering, and degradation, for a time, in caves and dens, they see a vessel from their native country bearing a message of suitable mercy to them; and they

are invited to join again their long left friends in the bright and joyous circles of affection; to be freed from all their troubles, and to be made completely happy, on the bare condition of voluntary acceptance; what base ingratitude would it be in them to spurn such a kind offer of relief! But, if added to such ingratitude, they should make combined and continued efforts to sink the vessel and destroy all on board—what then?

A vessel of mercy *has come* to self-exiled man from his "Friend" in the spirit-land. "The Captain of our salvation" is on board that vessel, calling sinners, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But the sinking island of desolation is preferred by many to a voyage to the "better land" with Jesus in the ship, who will safely guide it with its passengers to the immortal shore of blessedness! O sinner, come, for

> "There all the ship's company meet,
> Who sail'd with the Saviour beneath."

# CHAPTER XII.

## FRAGMENTS GATHERED UP IN THE ITINERANCY.

Lament who will, in fruitless tears,
  The speed with which our moments fly;
I sigh not over vanish'd years,
  But watch the years that hasten by.—BRYANT.

FACTS observed in common life, as we pass along through it, may in a measure be forgotten while travelling *to* the grave, but after travelling *from* it, will doubtless revive in the memory with all the clearness and distinctness of first perceptions. Like the writings in "invisible ink," transpired events, passing the fires of the judgment, will come out in immortal memory, to be seen and read of all, no more to be forgotten. A timely and proper observance of such facts is of importance. It leads to a true knowledge of the past, which aids materially in imparting ability to rightly estimate the present; and such valuation of present things, with our lives floating on the stream of moments, gives strength and clearness of vision to penetrate deeper into the future. Such knowledge so derived has more of the quality of reality, and is safer in the results to which

it leads, than the *unexperimental* theories so much sought out and followed by modern "filthy dreamers," who look for improvements and refinements in the system of old-fashioned revealed truth, so well sustained by facts which have been observed in all past ages.

The annual session of the New-Jersey Conference, in the spring of 1841, was held in Newark, when I was received by that body on trial as a travelling preacher. My first appointment was to Rome and Wantage Circuit, with Rev. *John N. Crane* for my colleague, a man of prudence, precision, and careful deportment. The place fixed upon as my residence was near the northern part of the circuit, in Minisink, Orange County, New-York, about sixty miles from Newark, New-Jersey. To be prepared for moving to my new field of labour required more money than I then had at my command. Of this I said nothing, but looked in faith with prayer to God for aid. I was much strengthened in my faith at the closing meeting of the session for the reading out of the appointments. Bishop Hedding presided, and having given (according to request) his clear views of Christian perfection in an extempore address, an afternoon previous, he now made but few, yet very appropriate remarks, and called on the late Rev. *James Moore* to speak some words of

comfort to those who were about to separate soon, and "go forth weeping, bearing precious seed." Father Moore's remarks can never be forgotten by those who heard him at that time. He requested us, if any of us should go before him to heaven, to give "his respects" to Father Abraham and to Paul. It was the last time I ever saw that eminently pious minister of Christ, whose memory is so embalmed in the hearts of many Methodist families that he often visited in this State.

It was soon noised abroad among my friends that I was going to move away and become a travelling preacher. Articles and money to the extent of variety and amount needed, soon were given to me, under the direction of all pervading Providence. One friend gave me a saddle and bridle, which I did *without*, and *lent out* until they were *worn out*. A Presbyterian brother made me a present of a time-piece, that I might "watch" while remembering him in my prayers. Money I received, varying in sums from one to five dollars, till it reached, in the aggregate, about sixty dollars. The liberality on the occasion showed me how, when grace calls the gospel preacher to take the *sword* of action, Providence opens a way that leads to the proper *field* of action.

All prepared, "packed up," and ready, we left,

and arrived at our parsonage on Saturday afternoon. After unboxing our goods and arranging the furniture, night began to set in. Some sticks were picked up to have on hand to burn on the coming Sabbath. We sat down, and though at *home*, were weary, and among strangers. I said to my wife, "Mary, put on the tea-kettle, and let us have something to eat." She replied, "Why, we have no bread, butter, nor flour in the house, and the rain has prevented our getting any the whole afternoon." It was then muddy, raining, and dark—where could I go, among strangers, for bread, at such an hour? True, fasting for a while would not have been attended with serious injury, but I could not see special need of it *then*. I felt that the Lord knew all about us, and it was interesting to me to see what provision Providence would make in so small a matter. I persisted in having the kettle hung over the fire, and with patience waited for supper. My wife would not light a candle, because its light would reveal to me tears, which she desired to conceal. The door stood partly open, and the night was pitchy dark. While looking out I saw suddenly, upon that cloudy back-ground, the outlines of a human form—a man bearing in his hands a loaf of bread and a roll of butter. He silently deposited his burden on the table and departed. None of

the family saw "the sight" but myself. It was something that satisfied an inspired expectation, built on no earthly reason. I turned again to Mary, and reminded her of the needed supper. The tea-kettle singing over a blazing fire, we could in cheerfulness repeat the chorus,—

> "The cricket cherups on the hearth,
> The crackling fagot flies."

A candle is lighted, and tears of joy at the provision of Providence flow faster than those which had fallen through unbelief. The table is spread, and we sit down to supper. A blessing in gratitude is asked, and the hungry are filled. The family altar is erected, and the sacrifice is accepted; and the first night's rest in the parsonage is sweet, from the experience of divine influence.

In much kindness I was received by the people on the circuit, and I laboured in harmony with my colleague the first year of my itinerancy. I travelled on foot to my appointments, to the improvement of my bodily health, and have never yet had it to say, with King Richard the Third, "*My kingdom for a horse.*"

Taking a wrong impression from well-intended advice, not to make any special effort at grand preaching, I commenced my pulpit labours without proper preparation. This was an error; and one

class-leader expressed his fear to his brethren, "that there was death in the pot." A few of the official brethren consulted together on the propriety of advising me to go home. But this state of things did not long continue. With some study, prayer, and a spiritual baptism, I improved in preaching; and, thank the Lord, death was not found in the pot, neither was I sent home.

The fear of gratifying a vain curiosity in the hearers of the "new preacher," led me into an extreme which should have been avoided. I am yet however of opinion, that the "new preacher" does not act wisely, when he fires off, in his first sermon on his charge, a "big gun"—borrowed, alas! it may be—which is (of necessity) to be followed by a continual discharge of small arms, loaded often with blank cartridges.

Conversions followed our labours in our different appointments. During a revival in the Rome appointment, a young lady in love-feast, relating her experience, said that her conversion had resulted from what had been spoken to her by my colleague and myself, during a pastoral visit in her father's family. After prayer, Mr. Crane had taken her by the hand, and said, "Give your heart to the Lord while young." I had followed him, she said, and remarked, "If you don't repent, you'll go to hell." This warning and ex-

postulation had sounded in her ears night and day, until she at the altar for prayer found peace in believing.

On a charge across the Delaware there was a revival of religion in progress. I was sent for, and went over to help in labours of love. I had been there and preached, a few weeks before, and related my religious experience, which had left a desire among them to hear me again. A young lady, I was informed, had felt considerable anxiety on the subject of religion from hearing my experience; and, according to a request of the preacher in charge, I accompanied him in a visit to her. She was sweeping the floor at the time of our arrival, and I commenced conversation with her something after the following manner: "Sister, please just put up your broom for a few minutes, in order that I may ask you some serious questions." She complied. I continued: "Do you sincerely desire to enjoy religion?" "Yes, I think I do." "Then please answer my inquiries as I shall make them. Do you love your mother?" "Certainly I do." "No doubt of it; but you can *see* your mother. Would the knowledge of such love be clear if your mother were unseen? Do you love the name and character of General Washington, knowing the good he has rendered our country?" "I do venerate

that name," was her reply. "But now let me ask you a more difficult, and still more important question: Do you love the name of Jesus half as much as you do that of Washington, or your mother?" She answered with increasing emotion, "I do love him more, much more, than any other being! O, I do love him! and I feel—O yes, I do feel that he *does* love me, and blesses me now!" She sobbed aloud, and continued: "My sins are all forgiven, and I am happy! O he blesses my soul *now—now!*" She clasped her mother round her neck, and said, "O, my dear mother, the Lord has converted my soul this morning!" and there was great joy in that house.

In the spring of 1842 our conference met in the city of Camden, and I was returned to Rome and Wantage Circuit, with the late Rev. R. Launing for my colleague, as preacher in charge. I found in my new colleague a deeply pious man, and a good preacher. His views of the atonement were of a character most sound and clear. On this glorious doctrine he dwelt much in his preaching and meditations. He gloried in the cross. He often told me weeping, in our retirement from the world, that he did not expect to live long. "But, my dear brother Scarlett," he would say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth,

and that—faithful to the end—I shall wear a crown in his presence forever!"

We were favoured this year, also, with an outpouring of the Spirit on the circuit. At Mount Zion, or Finchville, we had a gracious turning to the Lord. One Sabbath afternoon, while riding with a friend in his sleigh to this appointment, after a considerable fall of rain, a trace happened to break just as we met a noted infidel riding on horseback. The infidel dismounted, and, taking an eel-skin from his pocket, said, "Boys, I see you want help," and supplied a link in the broken trace. I thanked him, and told him he should be remembered in my prayers. He replied that *he* did not stand in need of prayers, as he always carried fixtures enough with him for all that he needed. We had just passed over a slough, enlarged by the recent rain, and frozen over. Our sceptical friend, so independent of need, had remounted, and ridden not over fifty yards, when the ice broke in under his horse, letting him down into a cold bath, up to the necks of both man and beast. While struggling in *his* difficulty, amid the broken ice around him, I reminded him of his need of help from something more efficacious than his fixtures. His chilling example before he was extricated, on that cold winter day, afforded another

specimen of the *eel-skins* of infidelity's trust, and the opportunity for another anecdote to illustrate some point in my afternoon sermon, showing the cold and sinking condition of infidels.

During this year a friend endeavoured to bribe me; he did not succeed, of course. My school-bill, to the amount of several dollars, had been paid by some one desirous of keeping it concealed. Suspicion rested on a man who had done such things sometimes to the poor. I went to him and inquired whether he had paid the bill, for he was suspected. He looked at me awhile with affected innocence, and then gave me ten dollars, saying, "Please take this, and say nothing more about the school-bill." I took the money from the hand of the late *S. M. Stoddard*, Esq., without a promise on my part to conceal the bribery; and so here it is made known for an example to others.

In 1843 our conference met at New-Brunswick, and I was elected to deacon's orders, and ordained by Bishop Morris, on the 30th of April, my fortieth birthday. I received my appointment to Stanhope Circuit, to travel alone, without a colleague or a horse.

During this year there was a good work of grace manifested in a number of conversions in a revival at Roseville, one of my appointments on

the circuit. At this revival a young lady professed conversion, and shortly afterward, in her father's house, in an upper chamber, hung herself! The cause of this melancholy affair could not be ascertained. It is a very dangerous thing to throw impediments in the way of young converts, or to offer hinderances to them in their uniting with the Church of their choice.

The house of worship at Stanhope was erected this year, and was dedicated by Rev. William Roberts, (now missionary superintendent in Oregon,) accompanied by the late Rev. L. T. Maps. While on this circuit I sometimes travelled on foot twenty-one miles on a Sabbath, and preached three times. This was too much—but what could I do, without a horse, without the means to procure one, or the desire to have one?

A generous canal-man, with a horse whose large and heavy feet carried his legs along with a kind of pendulum swing, offered one Sabbath evening to take me to my appointment, about three miles off. The horse moved slowly, and I said to his master, "Jim, we'll not be in time at this rate." He replied, "The horse is *not warm yet*—he'll go it, I tell you, when he gets warm!" The horse travelled on with increased speed, sure enough, until within about three hundred yards of the stopping-place, and then Jim

began to hold in with all his might. I said, "Why, we are not yet at the schoolhouse, Jim." But Jim replied, "I know it, but the horse is warm now, and *will go!*" And true enough his heavy legs kept swinging on until we were past the place fifty yards before stopping. I have thought of this horse while listening to preachers, who, too cold at first, and then too warm, go *too far* before they stop in their sermons.

In 1844 the conference held its session in the city of Trenton. I was returned to Stanhope Circuit, with brother *Samuel D. Lougheed* for my colleague. I had become acquainted with him at his father's house, on Rome and Wantage Circuit, where I had often stopped, and found the warmest reception and kindest hospitality. The father of my colleague is a local preacher of great acceptability, and much beloved. I found in the young man, as I had expected, a pious, studious, laborious, and successful preacher of the gospel, and we enjoyed together many happy seasons in our united endeavours and prayers to bring sinners to Christ.

During the winter of that year we held a series of meetings in a schoolhouse, where preaching the gospel was to them "a new thing under the sun." One evening a man came to meeting carrying with him an ash stick, intending to work

at splint-broom making, while hearing the word. He discontinued this business when requested. About a dozen of those hard-working people were converted during our meetings. One evening I was invited home with a man whose occupation was iron making, with the use of charcoal amid its dust. I found, after supper and prayer, that the smallness of the house made it necessary for me to take up my lodgings with the husband in the main-room. The family having retired, I went to bed also, when the husband went to the door, having piled a huge quantity of wood on the fire, and whistled. A dog of the largest size made his appearance in the room. He whistled again—another dog, equal in size, came in. The man of dogs and coal-dust was soon in the bed with me, and I lay far front to avoid a too close proximity. The fire, for a while, burned in domestic cheerfulness. The dogs, alternately, went through performances with their paws, like playing on Jews-harps! They yawned, as the crackling of the falling brands declared the lessening of the fire's influence upon them. The wintry wind howled as it sprinkled the driving snow over my bed. My companion snored his hours away in refreshing sleep, proving that the rest of the labouring man is sweet. Toward day I fell asleep, and dreamed that I was hurt in the *face*, and

that my wife was bathing it with a warm wet cloth. I waked up and found that the dogs had been giving me a *licking*, and I had the *face to declare it!*

In 1845 our conference was held in Mount Holly. Here I was elected to elder's orders, and was ordained at Pemberton by Bishop Janes. I was appointed at this conference to Belvidere charge.

A good parsonage in Belvidere added much to our convenience and comfort, and the people were most kind and sociable. Belvidere has many attractions, from scenery, flowers, birds, and the taste of its inhabitants. I was happy in my labours in this delightful spot, and rejoiced in fruits and prospects. The church, however, was in the wrong place—a short distance out of town. It has been recently pulled down, and a superior one put up in the *right* place.

In the spring of 1846, conference was held in Newark. During this session I had an opportunity of taking by the hand many old acquaintances. Many had become converted to God since I had left the place. It affected me to see some who had been dissolute in their lives, now on their way to heaven.

I was returned to Belvidere, and the second year was as agreeable to me as the first. Our

Sabbath sunrise prayer-meetings were precious seasons, and I have often wished that such meetings might become general throughout the whole Church. Our Sabbath-school exercises it is pleasing still to remember.

While aiding a preacher on a neighbouring circuit in an extra meeting, an infidel came out to hear me, and became angry, declaring that I was *as bad as the rest* of Methodist preachers!—that none of them preached anything but Jesus Christ. "With them," he said, "it is Jesus Christ here, and Jesus Christ there, and Jesus Christ altogether, and all the time." I hope, that notwithstanding the bad motive that prompted the charge, it may never be a false one!

In 1847 the session of our conference was held in Salem. Here I heard for the first time, and also the last, the late Rev. Dr. N. Levings preach a sermon. It was to my mind and heart a feast of fat things; and it was so regarded by the brethren. I was here shown the spot where the bones of the noted Benjamin Abbott repose, a name so dear in the annals of early Methodism in New-Jersey.

I received this year my appointment to Madison Circuit; and strange to tell, my wife, while I was at conference, dreamed that I was sent there;

and the dream was not occasioned by previous conversation, or thoughts on the subject.

Our parting from our friends in Belvidere was attended with tender feelings. The conversion of two of my children there had endeared to them the people and the place; and "the girls," with some older ones, wept while taking the parting hands of Christian companions in the Sabbath-school and Church-membership.

I found Madison an agreeable abode, and the people kind. I had for my colleague Rev. J. W. Barrett, a man of companionable qualities, and of pure life and deportment. With him I laboured in harmony, and success attended our labours, to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

The previous year on this circuit had been one of prosperity; and unusually so at Green-village. At this place the brethren, in the fall, wished a protracted meeting to be held. The meeting was held, but did not have manifested in its object as lively an interest by the people as the revival-meeting, in the same place, the previous year. A brother was heard to say, "O, if brother H—— [my predecessor] was here, it would go; for he made it go last year!" The next evening brother H—— was there with us, and preached. As he ascended the pulpit the brother was heard to say, "Bless God, I know it will

go now. *He* can make it go, as he did last year." The preacher preached and exhorted for three successive evenings—*but it did not go.* What of revival can man produce without divine agency?

In Madison, during the winter, there was a gracious outpouring of the Spirit; and within three weeks there were over seventy sinners converted to God. The power of God was most signally displayed in a sudden and thorough work. Four sons of four preachers of the gospel were made the subjects of saving grace in this revival. At this, four preachers, with their families, were made greatly to rejoice. My son—the only one—was one of the happy number, and then there was weeping joy in our family—all my children converted to God!

At this protracted meeting we had not much extra help, the local preachers with the brethren in general coöperating with us; and we all, with God, were the chief instruments in this revival. And most efficient help was rendered by Rev. C. Griswold, of Richmond, Va., who was at the time on a visit to his friends in the place.

This winter our presiding elder, Rev. D. Parish, in holy triumph, departed for his heavenly home on high. The last time I had the pleasure of seeing this holy man alive, was at his own

house; and I spent a precious season with him in private devotion, little thinking it would be the last interview I would be permitted to enjoy with him on earth.

In 1848 the New-Jersey Conference held its session in Paterson. Here, at the house of brother Chadwick, I roomed with the late Rev. V. Shepherd. Brother S. was in a feeble state of health; and for the little attention which I was pleased to render to his wants he manifested much gratitude. I slept in a separate bed, and recollect, in the night seasons, a number of times, when he thought, no doubt, all were fast asleep, he arose, and kneeled down and prayed with much subdued emotion. He said to me one day: "I will not live long, I feel it; but if I could again preach, O, I would preach Jesus more than ever; for nothing will do for sinners or preachers but Jesus, and him crucified!"

I was returned to Madison without a colleague; our new presiding elder, however, provided for the circuit, by procuring a local preacher to travel under his direction with me, who had just passed through one of the most awful calamities, in the destruction by fire of his house, and *the lives of his wife and three children.*

There were some on this circuit that, because

of the books of "Annan" and "Musgrove," which had been circulated among them, were prejudiced against the economy of Methodism; and for this reason I had preached on the peculiarities of our Church, to disabuse the public mind on the subject. I had been challenged to hold a public debate on the question of the government of the Methodist Episcopal Church. I had told the bearer of the challenge that my antagonist had nothing in such controversy to lose, and I had nothing to gain; and what I knew and had stated about our Church government was, I was assured, correct: that the Church property did not belong to our bishops, nor to the annual conferences, nor were they deeded to them. The visit of Bishop Janes, and his preaching at Madison and Whippany, after what had been said of our bishops, had a most salutary influence on the people.

There was a remarkable case of a dying Christian this year, at Whippany, that graciously went to illustrate the power of saving grace. He was a member of the Presbyterian Church, and I visited him a number of times during his illness. He said he had been awakened by a sermon on, "At evening time it shall be light." Zech. xiv, 7. He repeated more than once the lines of Heber:—

"Till o'er our ransom'd nature
The Lamb for sinners slain—
Redeemer, King, Creator—
In bliss returns to reign."

And as the lips of the dying man gave utterance to these words, with an expression of countenance not to be described, I realized a deep meaning and beauty in them not before discerned.

The house of worship in Whippany was this year relieved of a debt of several hundred dollars, which had rested with a weight upon it for about twenty years.

Near the close of the conference year on this circuit, there was an aged lady, a member of our Church, who died in great triumph. Near her end she was the subject of sore temptations. I visited her often, according to her own request, and always found her reading the Bible and praying. She was so violently assaulted by the enemy, that her hope of reaching heaven was shaken. I at last told her I did not think her fit for the place of devils and the lost, for she would be praying and repeating God's word, and they would not have her there; and there was no place for her to go when she died but to heaven, with Jesus, and all the blessed saints who love his word." The temptation was shortly broken, and she rejoiced greatly, uttering

with her dying breath to her son, "Samuel, do all you can for Christ—do all you can for Christ; for he is worthy."

In the spring of 1849 the conference met in Burlington. During the period of its session I heard a most excellent sermon by the Rev. J. T. Peck, D. D., President of Dickinson College. Here I received my appointment to Mariners' Harbour Church, on Staten Island, and an unusual sadness fell upon my spirits. I prayed for an increased disposition to bow to the chastening hand of Providence. Mariners' Harbour Church was a small appointment of a charge, and the preacher had been in that charge two years. The presiding elder had been on the district four years, and the place, under such circumstances, had been set off by itself to become *a charge*. This I then thought, for good reasons, was premature and injudicious, and I have not altered my opinion since. I removed to the place with my family, and stayed there one year. We resided on the north shore, about a mile from the church, in the house with Captain William Vanname, and found him and his wife to be noble hearted, generous, and kind; and we lived together in harmony and pleasantness. And when their sweet little "Anna Maria" was taken from them, we felt, and wept, as though she had been our own child.

This year, to the whole country, was one of great gloom. The visitation of the cholera cast a sadness over all. Many of our neighbours were swept away by it. Some instances of unusual wickedness and temerity then appeared, that called down the sudden and fatal stroke. I was not well during the whole summer and most of the winter. The people were kind, but my ill health, loneliness, and the excited state of my nerves, depressed me. I had an abiding impression, that rested on my mind like an incubus, that God had no work for me to do there. Sometimes my brethren would try to cheer me with saying, "You will get your support, you need not fear." I replied, "That is the least of my trouble. I would not be *hired* to walk the Park or Broadway, in New-York, for three thousand dollars a year!" During the winter we were favoured with some few conversions.

In 1850, our conference met in Camden. During conference the wife of the stationed preacher in the place, Rev. Charles H. Whitecar, died, and the funeral sermon was preached in the church by the presiding elder, Rev. George F. Brown. Here was the conference at which I last saw Bishop Hedding. His health was then declining, but with what holy resignation!

I received my appointment, at this conference,

to Allentown Circuit, and had for my colleague brother *John B. Hill*, now a missionary in California. On this circuit I soon found friends of the right stamp, and things were agreeable to me, and I felt that I had a work to do. In my colleague I had a fellow-labourer of deep piety, ability, and zeal. He was studious, laborious, and firm in the cause of his Master; and storms, mud, cold, and snow, were no impediments to him in his persevering activity in endeavours to win souls to Christ.

In such company as brother Hill, Rev. R. E. Morrison, (superanuated,) living in Hightstown, the place of my residence, with the official brethren and membership on Allentown Circuit, the loneliness of my past year was soon forgotten. During this year we were favoured with an outpouring of the Spirit, manifested in the professed conversion of over seventy sinners.

At Hightstown we had a shower of mercy, and some powerful conversions. Universalism has been about this place one of the devil's "strongholds." This "refuge of lies" immortal souls have sought and trusted in, to the injury the immensity of which will not be known until seen by the light of the judgment fires. The impediments and obstructions which this instrument of Satan had thrown upon the railroad track of the

gospel train I endeavoured to remove, by holding it up to be seen in contrast with the unsophisticated declarations of God's word. The Universalist preacher came out a number of times and listened to my plain manner of treating the subject. Many of the Universalists in the place are of worldly respectability, and, as to dealings with their fellow-men, are just and honourable. Were they as faithful in the true belief and practice of the doctrines and precepts of the word of God, they would do well enough. One of them during the revival left the meeting one evening before its close, and said, in the hearing of my informant, that he guessed Scarlett would make out to get along now, since the devil (meaning himself) had left the church. He, with a number of others that attended the meeting, died shortly after, as they had lived.

While on this circuit I became acquainted with the Rev. *Robert Hutchinson*, now nearly ninety years of age. He told me he had travelled with *Benjamin Abbott*, and has his retentive memory stored with many an incident illustrative of Methodism, in its introduction into this State. His eyesight has nearly failed him, but his mental faculties are remarkably preserved. He is most entertaining company, being possessed of extensive information and agreeable manners.

In the spring of 1851 conference met in Jersey City. Here I saw that great and good man, the late Rev. Stephen Olin, D. D., for the last time. I was returned to Allentown Circuit, with brother *E. W. Adams* for my colleague. Following so popular a preacher as brother Hill, it was at first feared that brother Adams would not be able to sustain himself with as much credit as was desirable, but the young man proved himself to be studious, zealous, laborious, and useful. His piety and prudence *out of the pulpit* were equalled by soundness of doctrine, good arrangement, with force and ease of delivery *in the pulpit.*

About one hundred souls were converted on the circuit this year. At Hightstown we experienced one of the greatest revivals ever known in the place. About the 20th of January we commenced a meeting, which was protracted some eight weeks. In the commencement we gave no quarter to Universalism, but held up this fortification of carnal security to the scorn and contempt of all honest Christians. We showed its conflicting character with the word of God, and with Christian experience; and that this disease of the understanding, this gangrene of the heart, this soul-scurvy, has no redeeming qualities. We did not waste our time in offering arguments to prove, in all *probability*, that the im-

penitents, after death, would "go away into everlasting punishment." We merely proclaimed what is revealed on the subject, and denounced the wickedness of opposing divine revelation.

In this revival there were about ninety conversions, nearly eighty of which number united themselves with our Church in the village. The work was characterized by deep and powerful convictions, violent strugglings, and audible and agonizing cries, while at the altar for prayers, sudden conversions, with overwhelming emotions! There was noise made by the young converts, and among the members of the Church. There was crying, and shouting, and some clapping of hands, and jumping; and yet no "*wild-fire*," as far as I could tell. Bodily strength, in some instances, gave way, and sister Morrison, wife of Rev. R. E. Morrison, had to nurse a number of female converts that were prostrated by the power of God, until they could shout "Glory!" She is a woman of such good sense that she had no objection to the Lord's working in this way. I called her "a nursing mother in Israel." God's work in this manner was carried on—in no wise agreeably to the dictates of worldly prudence or policy.

Some Universalists were converted. One of them, a respectable young man, after conversion, acknowledged that his conviction was received

while hearing a funeral sermon preached by Rev. J. K. Shaw, our presiding elder, in which sermon the elder had clearly set forth, "that dying, although *gain* to the Christian, was *not gain* to the impenitent." He stated also, that on leaving the church after hearing the sermon, an intelligent young man of some amiable qualities, walking with him, said, "We have most certainly been listening to *the truth* this afternoon, and we would do very well if it were not for these Universalists, who put the devil in our heads!" Now, this young man, who was so conscious of the truth when our young convert was first convicted, has passed through that revival, and is *now* a stronger Universalist than ever, from the resistance he has offered to the strivings of the Spirit. "He that hardeneth his neck shall be destroyed."

My colleague, brother Adams, was of great service in our meetings, being a good singer, and ready and fluent in exhortation and prayer. And in his preaching there was unity of thought, naturalness in arrangement, and clearness, with force in manner, language, and delivery. And the best of all, there was soundness of doctrine, not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God. There were some complainings among the Universalists that I had spoiled him—that he was now almost as bad as myself.

Rev. R. E. Morrison (superannuated) was in our meetings nearly every evening, and sanctioned the manner in which the truth of God was held forth by the preacher in charge and his colleague; and although weak in lungs, he a number of times during the meetings, under the powerful influence of the Spirit, levelled gospel thunder against the devil's strongholds, with an energy that astonished those that heard him. What wonderful effect the Holy Spirit can have on a remnant of frail, worn-out humanity! "The wind bloweth where it listeth."

In 1852, April 7th, the New-Jersey Conference met in Trenton. Bishop Janes presided; and from fatiguing toil the bishop looked worn and feeble. During this session we received the intelligence that Bishop Hedding had departed this life in great triumph, in certain hope of a blissful immortality. I received my appointment to Red Bank Station, where I am now, pleasantly situated in a good parsonage, and among a kind people. May the Lord send us prosperity in his holy cause, for Jesus' sake.

I have now travelled eleven years in the Methodist itinerancy. I have had temptations and trials. I have had severities and hardships, but I would still rather be a Methodist preacher than anything else on earth. The pleasure of the

Lord still abides with me, and I have delightful seasons. I am passing down the declivity of years, having doubtless passed over the summit of my earthly career. How long I may yet be permitted to travel before I fall, or where my body shall find a spot of earthly repose when my heart ceases to throb, is to me of little consequence, so long as I shall make full proof of my ministry, and be prepared to keep company with the blood-washed and shining orders, and see Jesus after I shall have passed through my grave-slumber, the general conflagration, and the judgment scenes.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS.

Christianity in earnest.—CHALMERS.

IN the remembrance of what I experienced while a child, and what I have witnessed, since "manhood's prime," in children—especially connected with Sabbath schools—in addition to injunctions and invitations found in the Holy Scriptures, I have long been decided in my opinion that children are, generally, in this Christian land, the subjects of spiritual operations. To this important matter Christian parents and the Church are not sufficiently awake. Children, although they are more spiritually cared for than formerly, are, nevertheless, too much neglected. They often feel powerful strivings of the Spirit, and, not sympathized with or instructed, they take the indifference of those who have the charge of them to be an evidence that their feelings on religion are nothing but *childish nonsense;* and they thus are left to go down into spiritual darkness and discouragement, until they sin away their early convictions, and become hardened in sin,—when, with proper care, nine times out of

ten, they might be trained to grow up happy Christians and useful members of society. There is much darkness on this subject even among many good members of the Church. Too much of atheistic "chance" still reigns among us. Christians may, and should, train up their children "in the way they should go," and when old, they, as a general rule, would not depart from that way. If infidelity, in regard to the "exceeding great and precious promises," were driven out of the Church, how many children would soon be soundly converted! And converted children, with proper care, are no more liable to backslide than persons of mature age, although their backsliding might sooner be discovered than that of older Christians. Children ought to be acknowledged by Christian parents as being of Christ's kingdom; and although they cannot theologically understand the doctrines of grace, they can be kept by the power of God, notwithstanding. Must an infant be kept from its mother's breast until it can analyze and explain the nature of the nourishment that is designed for it from this source? Cannot a child love its parents before it can philosophically define love? Cannot children love God as well as their parents? Instances of such experience there have been in every age, that go to prove the truths of revela-

tion, and leave parents without excuse for leaving their children at the hazard of adventitious circumstances, and not training them up for God, "in the way they should go."

I am also, from what I have learned of the ways of God in my experience and labours as an itinerant preacher, pressed into the conclusion that the people of God in the Church, with the ministry, are more immediately required to be witnesses for Christ than pleaders of his cause. I do not mean that commentaries and expositions, in reference to obscure portions of Scripture by learned men, are not necessary. I believe the Church "has need" of sanctified learning, and God will supply every want; but experience is the *central point* in religion. Fire-producing, all heat comes from it to the Church; and woe to that branch of the Church where this fire is not seen nor felt. There is another kind of fire reserved for dry branches! No testimony is stronger or more easily understood than experimental testimony. "Ye are my witnesses," says Jesus. A batch of mere religious theorists may appear quite a fine affair to the world; but who among God's enlightened children cannot see, at once, that such an association is nothing more than a "whited sepulchre, full of rottenness and dead men's bones?" Spiritual testimony,

in an inextinguishable flame, must burn in the Church. By the "words" of living testimony the followers of salvation's Captain must "prevail" over their combined foes. Like rivers of living water, it must be poured out from the pulpit. It is this that revives and gladdens the believing heart in times of class-meetings and love-feasts; and without which such meetings will lose all their attractiveness and peculiarity, for which they were originally instituted. This testimony of the *lips* must of course be from the *heart*. It is to go with faith, as far as the work of the Spirit extends, and give vent to the breathings of eternal life, as that life appears in regeneration, justification, and sanctification. The "oil" of grace within the heart must, like oil within a burning lamp, shine without, "to give light to all within the house."

This witnessing for Jesus, "who saves his people from their sins," by believers, has been a characteristic peculiarity of the Methodists, who from the first have adhered to this particular in their writings, as well as in oral testimony; and the brightest ornaments of the Church have had their progress toward the highest mark in Christian perfection signally marked by the testimony they have uttered in their spiritual advances. Those, therefore, who may aim in

their religious efforts at having carried on in their hearts a *concealed* work of grace, will ever be baffled in effecting their object. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come."

From facts which have received some attention in the foregoing chapters, I cannot avoid the conclusion that METHODISM is a Church form of godliness, with a power the nearest in resemblance to primitive Christianity of any other in modern times. Methodism is a system consitent with itself, and consistent with the Bible; is suitable to the universal wants of mankind; and harmonizes in every part with Christian experience. Its true definition is its best recommendation; and the less it is departed from, by those within its fold, the better for them, and the world around them, and other Churches; and the more will God be glorified by their adherence to its original forms. Methodism could not be improved by exchanging any of its peculiarities for those of other Churches.

In the distinctive doctrines of the Methodist Episcopal Church we see something that "commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." These doctrines are:—

The necessity and universality of the atonement made by the sacrificial death and sufferings of Jesus Christ.

The free moral agency of man, by free and universal grace given.

The justification of the ungodly by faith, exclusively and immediately.

The direct witness of the Spirit of God with our spirits.

The entire sanctification of the soul from all sin.

The liability constantly to fall from grace, and be lost.

These doctrines Methodism has armed itself with from the beginning. They have been drawn from the armory of God—the Bible—and wielded with success. And in holding these doctrines there has appeared in them nothing that clashes, but perfectly harmonizes on all occasions. In Methodism there is not held any *secret doctrine*—which none but the elect are to meddle with—to be brought forward on certain occasions only, and then to be kept behind the curtain, while other doctrines more suitable for general use are dwelt upon, until the special occasion again returns. Methodism embraces nothing in doctrine that is not useful and proper, even in times of revival. Yea, revival is promoted by these doctrines, every one of them. And when sinners are converted through them, there is no need of labouring with them until they are nearly deranged, to get them to submit to what appears fallacious and paradox-

ical; but our doctrines are, in every step they take, identified with their experience.

The doctrines held by other denominations that are found to disagree with those of Methodism, have never had, evidently, a good effect upon those believing them. Persons entertaining doctrines antagonistical to ours, have been led by zeal in their cause to write books concerning Methodism, that "savoured not the things that be of God." They have apparently taken more pleasure in making statements against the influence of Methodism, than in spreading holiness. While others, again, have thought it necessary to assume the grounds of Methodist doctrines, and of Methodist forms, in order to the revival of God's work among them. But when Methodists have assumed the doctrines and forms of other denominations, have *they* succeeded *as well?* These remarks are made not to offend any, but to give the mind of the reader, if possible, a clearness of view of the more excellent way. The more Methodism is truly exposed to view, the more will it prosper; and any system of doctrine, in any Church, that requires secrecy to maintain it, the sooner it is driven from the Church, and buried in oblivion, the better.

The itinerant ministry is another peculiarity of Methodism, that has been exhibited quite large-

ly in the world. This ministry has shown its credentials to be of the true evangelical stamp. Its preaching has been in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. It has not, thus far, been *tongue-tied* to written sermons, to be read in coldness to an unmoved body of hearers. It has been free in truth, in tongue, and in travelling. It has not been bound by word nor by wages.

The preaching of the Methodist itinerant ministry has been the means of a work resembling that on the day of Pentecost, more than any other form of gospel preaching since apostolic days. By it devils have been cast out, and most wonderful reformations have taken place. The greatest revival of pure religion in the world has been brought about by it: thousands and millions of sinners, the century last past, has it succeeded in turning to the "wisdom of the just."

This ministry is a body of self-denying men. Leaving, on true missionary principles, a permanent home, relatives, friends, and pleasant associations, for hardships, trusting in Providence, they "go forth weeping, bearing precious seed," that they may "win souls" to deck their Redeemer's crown.

This ministry is supported by voluntary contributions, without the preacher's having a claim on the people by previous written agreement.

This plan works well both ways: on the preacher it has a tendency to exercise his faith in God, and to lead him to desire to be useful to the people, from heavenly motives; on the part of the people it is calculated to draw their benevolent feelings into voluntary exercise, to the mutual benefit of the preacher they support, and their own hearts.

This ministry has its starting place, under God, from among the people in the Church, and through their votes in class-meetings and in quarterly conferences. No ministry is less foreign from the people, and less liable to be considered oppressive to them, than that of Methodism.

Methodism, in its government and discipline, is just what its doctrines and free itinerant ministry lead to. They must all go together, or fall together.

The influence that Methodism, as it is, in all its parts, exerts, is beyond what can now be accurately defined. We are not to look for the effects of this influence within merely its own bounds. Other Churches are now what they would not have been, in piety and power, had Methodism never appeared. Methodism has to them been a battery, from which they have received light and fire. This should be a matter of rejoicing to Methodists, and all Christians.

We receive blessings to give blessings away. And what Methodism has done for civilization it is impossible for us to estimate. Yet we have good reason to believe that these United States are much indebted, under God, to Methodism, for their superior greatness over other nations. In this respect Methodism is a responsible body. The union of these United States is much within the influence of Methodism. May God preserve both long to bless mankind, is the prayer of every true Methodist and American.

The position occupied by Methodism is thus seen to be indeed a peculiar one. All the "branches" of the Christian Church are not exactly—in freshness, vigour, and fruitfulness—alike, although of the same "Vine." They are not alike in affording favourable opportunities and gracious means in order to the salvation of sinners, and to "make their calling and election sure;" and it would be profitable to give our meditation in prayer for light on the subject.

The origin of Methodism, and the circumstances connected with it at the time, mark it also as a peculiar system, unlike the institutions that have originated with man. Divine power and wisdom were displayed in starting this sublime development of Christianity, as well as sustaining it in the after progress it has made. This is clear from the

fact that the instruments in its origin had no idea of what was about to take place through them. They looked with astonishment on the "strange" work that God was accomplishing through them. They wondered and trembled at seeing, through the word they preached, by the Spirit imparted to them, men and women falling down like the slain in battle, crying, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" until evidently created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. They kept in their journals a statement of facts of these mighty doings of God, in order at proper times to meet together and consult on their probable duty in the work, and to pray for aid and direction. And when preachers from the ranks of the common people, and often unlearned, were suddenly qualified and called, and made good proof of their ministry, they were about to stop them, and dared not, "for God was with them of a truth." The form of doctrine, the mould of government, discipline, and usages, came upon them unlooked-for and without human forethought. The work of the Spirit moved them into forms of class-meetings and love-feasts. The same principles led out into the itinerancy, and other forms in Methodism; and all manifestly through the divine agency, as far at least as the main principles are concerned.

The instruments of the origin of Methodism present the same peculiar features as accord with the whole system. In John Wesley we see a chosen vessel, and a leader of God's Israel. Such a leader and minister was this great man, as was eminently qualified by the great Head of the Church, to do what no other man on earth could have done,—such a work as was most peculiarly needed at the time.

In Charles Wesley we see, also, a much needed, gifted child of song—a sweet singer in this Israel. Suited, every way, to the wants of early Methodism, his place could not have been supplied by another.

In the clear-headed and loving-hearted Fletcher, we may behold one raised up evidently to defend, as an evangelical polemic, the doctrines of Methodism, and the vilely-assailed character of its patient and laborious founder. Never has a controversialist wielded so powerful a pen,—so keen-pointed and piercing, and yet so impelled by heart-warming principles of divine love. Never was one more fitted for his day and generation, in uncovering errors held by Christians, and giving "checks" to the injurious tendencies of "Antinomianism." Never lived man more pure, more happy, nor died more triumphant and lamented, than the sainted Fletcher.

Methodism, from the time of its origin to the present, has presented a universal adaptedness to all the wants of all classes, and conditions, and circumstances of men; and it embraces within its fold more variety of persons—in capacities, gifts, and versatile powers—than any other denomination. It is itself a field for the exercise of all the vast variety of powers and capacities of those within its wide embrace, supplying from its immense resources employment for all its members. In the class-meeting, love-feast, and prayer-meeting—those prudential means of grace—there are opportunities afforded for the exercise of every grade of capacity, to the edification of the body of Christ; and all the children of God, in order to spiritual experience and strength, must have, in some personally active way, "the gift stirred up that is within them." Methodism is, therefore, a system of gospel model, giving to every member a suitable place of usefulness within its communion. In it the poor, especially, have the gospel preached to them. And it is equally suitable to the rich: it opens a field of enterprise for their money. It is adapted to the ignorant; and many of this class, ready to perish, have been raised by it out of degradation to respectability and salvation. And the learned have enough to do within its pale; neither have they been

cramped in their energies and acquired abilities through misgivings in reference to any of its peculiarities: and, blessed be God, he has afforded the Methodist Church as much sanctified learning as any other Church. It should be a matter of thankfulness, that while the common people and the illiterate are provided for among us, we have as learned Methodists as there are, in all probability, learned ones to be found in any other class. So that in our Zion every variety of aspect in human want is fully met, and every individual peculiarity, like the many parts of a complicated machine, is brought into particular utility with the general whole, in active usefulness for time and eternity.

In the probable *consequences* of Methodism flowing to future generations, there is a vast field thrown open. In prospect it is as mysterious and wonderful as it has been in the past. It will probably lose some of its less important features, but its doctrines and main principles, so manifestly from God, are of *self-subsisting energy;* and these will hold their place in the system until it shall reach the goal of time, the renovated earth and skies taking the place of the present mundane scene.

The kingdom of Christ "must increase" with the progress of constantly advancing time. This

increase will be in a clearer and fuller development of all the essential principles of salvation, manifested perpetually to Christ's believing *Church*, and the augmentation of saving power exerted upon the *world*, until "a nation shall be born in a day." Christ's kingdom cannot stand still nor retrograde. The advancement made by the Church is the passing through scenes peculiar to its probation, which scenes of difficulties and impediments, peculiar to *their* own times and places, can never occur but *once*. In this onward march a period will come in which the Church shall have met and conquered every foe, and removed the covering of every obstacle. "Then cometh the end."

THE END.

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